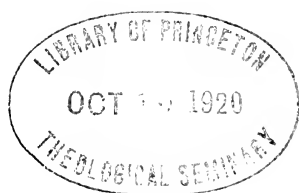


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The Story of the New Testament

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GESIS IN VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION BY FITZGERALD S. PARKER, D.D.
General Secretary of the Epworth League



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Un

Wilbur Fiske Tillett, A.M., D.D., LL.D., S.T.D.

*Loyal Son of the Church of the Fathers
Beloved Father in the Church of the Sons*

(3)

CHRISTIANITY is from the beginning life, 'and it is because this life pulsates through these primitive documents that they cannot be explained (or explained away) on any hypothesis of literary dependencies.—*Bernhard Weiss.*

There is something more important than the written word. The Christian Church is more than a book. Jesus was more than a word. Jesus the Logos, the Word, was the life, and the Church is a living society, a living fellowship. Christianity is an uninterrupted life.—*Caspar René Gregory.*

PREFACE

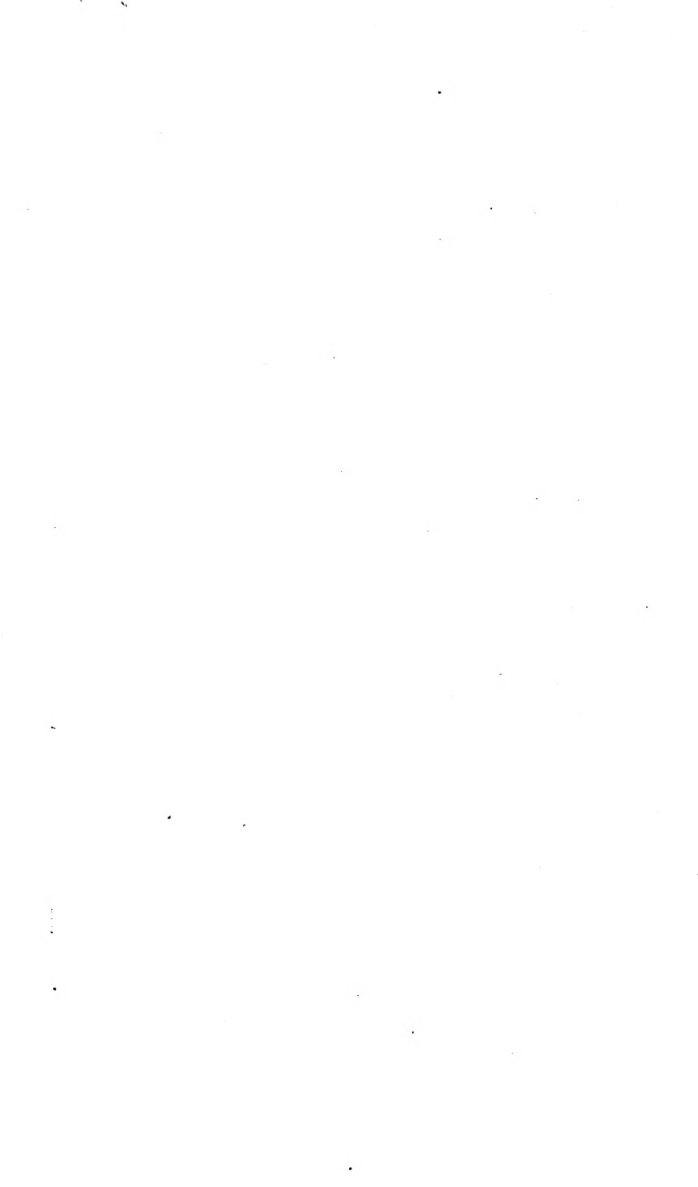
THIS little book, written several years ago as a series of monthly studies, is now sent forth without material modification. However, by far the better part of it, as it now appears—namely, the “Passages for Daily Readings” and the “Thought Questions”—is due to the General Secretary of the Epworth League.

I count this study of small value except in so far as those who follow it avail themselves of these absolutely essential aids. The Biblical material, which Dr. Parker has so judiciously selected, and the opportunity for intelligent reaction in terms of personal judgment that his suggestive questions afford will in a large measure offset the necessarily fragmentary character of the successive chapters.

It was thought inadvisable to burden the pages with references; footnotes, as a rule, distract even when they do not destroy interest. Scholars will readily recognize the footprints of the master guides, not slavishly but appreciatively followed, I trust. For others a partial bibliography will be found in the appendix.

It is the intention in the near future to issue a special study on the “Life and Letters of Paul.” This will be more intensive than the general plan of the present volume permitted. It will be especially suitable for Epworth League and Sunday school purposes.

THOMAS CARTER.



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INTRODUCTION

FOR all Christians the New Testament speaks with the voice of authority. Catholics may be contented to take its instructions at second hand from the authoritative Church, but Protestants are taught themselves to go to the source and learn. In many cases the difference is theoretical rather than practical. Our views of moral obligation and our religious beliefs are based upon what we suppose the Bible, especially the New Testament, to teach, but it must be admitted that comparatively few are in the habit of going direct to the book for the material out of which to form their opinions upon the most important subjects in the world. Certainly a majority cannot claim the beatitude pronounced by the seer of the Apocalypse: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein."

When it comes to the nourishment of our devotional life we do better; but even here our attitude is emotional rather than thoughtful, and many persons are more likely to use the passages they read as a means of reviving associated ideas than of ascertaining what is the real meaning of the Word of God. That is, we read the Bible in order to revive a memory, not to gain a fresh impression. It is no wonder that Bible-reading becomes tiresome and is neglected by the many, for whom it is confessedly of supreme importance. It must be made interesting if it is to become general and effective.

The purpose of the following pages is to make the New Testament interesting and inspiring by making it intelligible. The method is historical. That is, so to recall and present the human conditions and the divine movement of the Holy Spirit out of which the New

Testament came, and so to illuminate its text by an appreciation of what the authors of the several letters, tracts, and records that make up the collection intended to do, that the New Testament shall live again for us even as the Life that inspired it ever lives.

The end that the author set before him could be achieved by no other than a ripe scholar of varied and exact knowledge, to which are added genuine enthusiasm for his loved subject and true spiritual insight, the gift of the "anointing" that is received by those in whom the Life "abideth." Modest as it is in size and lacking in the apparatus of critical works, this volume would have been impossible without a basis of preparation in the most accurate scholarship; laden with the mechanism of the same it would have been unavailable for our purposes. I am not aware that another work of the same kind exists.

This volume is intended for a reading course book for the Epworth League. It must serve the double use of a textbook and a volume adapted to continuous reading. The happy combination has been made. In the summer conferences and assemblies it will be the basis of teaching at the Bible hour. In the local Chapters it will be available as a textbook or for devotional reading.

The rapid survey of the entire New Testament field that the author has undertaken presupposes on the part of the reader a fair degree of acquaintance with the text of the New Testament. However, lest the very purpose of the writing—that those who read may be able to feel the pulses of the life of the New Testament and understand its meaning for to-day—be defeated, the entire text should be read again in connection with the several chapters following; during a ten weeks' course that will require very little time, unless by comparison with the habit of regarding the Bible as a store from which we may take but small provision, a sweet text or two at a reading. As nearly as possible each book should be read through at a sitting. Passages for daily reading

are prefixed to each chapter, but these cannot take the place of fuller reading.

Each chapter is followed by a number of questions, the purpose of which is not a complete review of the preceding text, but the provocation of thought upon the lines that we have been following during the reading. These questions may be of especial service to the individual reader in clarifying and deepening the impression made by the study of the text. For use in group study it will usually be better for the leader to prepare questions adapted to the especial needs of the class.

Dr. Carter's book should have an audience far wider than the Epworth League. It is just the thing for every busy layman who desires to become a Bible reader and who does not know just where to begin to get an introduction available within the leisure he has to devote to it. It will refresh and vitalize the reading of the saint whose love lingers about familiar passages, but whose mind has ceased to find the enlarging meaning that the New Testament has for all who will read intelligently. As the basis of a series of studies in the books of the New Testament for adult classes in the Sunday school it has especial value.

FITZGERALD S. PARKER.

NASHVILLE, TENN., January, 1920.



THE STORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

I. INTRODUCTORY: WHY HAVE WE A NEW TESTAMENT

Passages for Daily Readings

Sunday.—New Testament Writings Classed with the Sacred Scriptures. 2 Peter 3: 14-18.

Monday.—The Objective in the Writing of John's Gospel. John 20: 24-30; 21: 24, 25.

Tuesday.—The Interest That Led to the Writing of Luke's Gospel. Luke 1: 1-4; 24: 44-49.

Wednesday.—A Connecting Link Between the Old and the New. Matthew 1: 22, 23; 4: 12-16.

Thursday.—A New Voice of Authority. Matthew 7: 24-28.

Friday.—A Circumstance Out of Which Came the First New Testament Writing. 1 Thessalonians 2: 17-3: 10.

Saturday.—For the Preservation of the Apostolic Testimony. 2 Peter 1: 12-21.

THE story we are about to engage in narrating is a very long but by no means a tedious tale. The New Testament has been in the world for nearly nineteen centuries. During these long years many things have happened *to* it, and many other things have happened *through* it. In its ever-developing life it traverses many countries; it touches and reflects and leaves its impress upon many phases of civic life; it reveals and purifies many sources of spiritual power. To tell this story in all its varied ramifications is impossible in the time and space allotted. We can, however, select the salient features of this narrative and by emphasizing these get the main outline before our minds and so become better acquainted with the volume as a

whole, more appreciative of its inner spirit, and better interpreters of its mission to ourselves and to the world at large. This story has been told many times before by those who knew it far better than any of us. Nevertheless, it still has its thrill for all who hear it once again; and it is with the hope that its retelling will afford information and inspiration to young Christians throughout the Church that these studies, first printed in the *Epworth Era*, are republished in book form. New light and new life are constantly breaking forth from the Word of God. May the oncoming hosts of our young Methodists catch the vision of this new light and become more and more partakers of this new life!

To tell the story of the New Testament with anything like fullness in the matter of the principles involved leads us at once into five great lines of approach.

In the first place, we should reckon with the *antecedent cause* or primary source of the Book and seek to see clearly the Influence or Life that made it possible. This would necessitate our considering at least in the large the place of Christ in the New Testament, or the relation of the incarnate Word to the written Word.

In the second place, we should consider the *accidental causes* or the peculiar environment that made any section or book of the New Testament necessary. There are twenty-seven of these books, and each is more or less a "tract for the time." It can be fully understood only on the background of the historic conditions that gave it birth; for here, as elsewhere, heredity and environment count for much. And we are beginning to see that in literature, as in life, we have to reckon with *origins* if we are to reckon rightly. So in all our dealings with the New Testament writings our fundamental guiding principle is: It shall be said of this Book that it was born *there*. And as we take our seat by the side of each successive author and read the writing from this standpoint, there thus comes a flood of light

upon the page we seek to understand which can come from no other point of the compass.

In the third place, we should study the *consolidating cause* or causes that found these many isolated and differently motived elements and forged them into a unified collection that should be the authoritative norm for creed and conduct throughout the universal catholic Church.

In the fourth place, we should consider briefly at least the *transmitting cause* or forces at work from the fourth to the twentieth century which have made it possible for us to-day to read these letters and narratives written in a different language for far different minds and climes from our own—stripped of their uncouth Greek or Syriac form and clothed now in the beautifully expressive English of the Authorized Version, or the more perfectly fitting garb of the American Revision, or in the familiar homespun of the Twentieth Century translation.

But even with all this our story would be far from complete; for to complete the narrative we should recount the thrilling history of *what the New Testament has accomplished and is still accomplishing* among the nations of earth in the demolition of old ideals, the abolition of superstitious and sinful practices, and in the lifting up of loftier standards for the manhood and womanhood of the race. This would lead us into a discussion of the *dynamic principles* of the Book; and no more fascinating chapter could be penned than that which marshals before our view the conquests of this Book of Life as it has gone forth ever conquering and to conquer. (Our present studies, however, will not touch the fourth and fifth phases at all.)

Each of these first four fields opens up a wide opportunity for investigation. Each presents many unsolved problems. There are many mysterious lapses and obscure places where our theories have to *limp* or *leap*, because there is as yet no solid foundation of fact to walk upon. All combined, they constitute one of the

most interesting and instructive realms of research known to the modern world. It is but a simple fact to assert that the New Testament, as small as it is, is the mental and moral magnet of some of the best intellectual effort of our modern world. Its pages are pored over more carefully and continuously, its principles are scrutinized and criticized with more industry and acumen, its persons are studied more profoundly, its problems are worked at more laboriously, its meaning is sought for more earnestly, and its message is understood more perfectly in our day than at any time since Paul at Corinth began the volume by penning his pastoral address to his Thessalonian converts, and John, in the far-away Eastern metropolis of Ephesus, in penning some of its final paragraphs, declared the message of Christianity in order that the heathen renegades of Asia Minor might participate in the fellowship enjoyed by the apostle of love. For this light we have to thank the great hosts of scholars who are so continuously and so conscientiously and so courageously laboring at the task of rightly divining and dividing the Word of Truth.

With the minor and the finer points of these extensive investigations we have not, however, to do primarily. We pay our tribute of respect and gratitude to these great minds and pass on to something more essential to our purpose than the mere scholastic or academic features of New Testament study and strike boldly out to discover, if we may, its inspirational center or life, its occasioning causes and its organizing principle. Hence it will be our first task to set forth briefly the uniqueness of the New Testament by reason of the place it assigns to the personality of Jesus. We shall then take up the subject of the New Testament in the making and discover, if possible, the contributing causes or the occasions that precipitated the several books. This part of our discussion will necessarily be more prolonged and more minute, as we shall seek to get a clear conception

of the origin, purpose, contents, and general teaching of each book. But this is the New Testament before it really became the New Testament. From this special study of the various elements that go to make up the volume we must pass in our subsequent study to touch briefly on the organizing principle at work in fashioning a homogeneous volume out of so heterogeneous a mass of literature. Here we shall consider as clearly as we may the formation of the canon or the rescuing of the several Gospels and letters from the obscurity and confusion of their early surroundings and their fusion into a single volume. This will bring us to the time in the fourth century when the New Testament as we know it first becomes a reality.

And now, first of all, why have we a New Testament or the possibility of one?

The brief and conclusive answer to this question is: Because we have had a new revelation of God, and as the outcome of this new revelation we have had a new life, and as the registration and explanation of this new life we have a new literature. We cannot suppose that the conceptions of Moses, the illuminating inspirations of Isaiah, or the pathetic plaints of the prophet of the exile could have been forever confined in the hearts of the men that first experienced them. Men must express to men their impressions from God. Personal testimony is the only channel for the communication of truth. The burden of the Lord is too much to bear. We have to *share* it with God's people; and so they too become the custodians of his grace, and the oracles of God are committed to their keeping. We cannot conceive how these would not in the ordinary ongoing of human affairs find a lodgment in literature. And as life is always back of literature, when the Life of life came to earth, the literatures of the world should open their doors and invite within the heavenly Guest. We might not have been able to forecast the type. We should probably have conjured up a New Testament much grander in style and much more imposing in ap-

pearance. But what we have is exactly in accord with the requirements of the case. For as Christianity is the impact of God's life in sonship, acting and reacting in the sphere of human relations, so the New Testament literature is thoroughly in harmony with this fundamental principle. It were impossible that such a life should remain forever outside the pale of literary setting. And so as the message is sonship, the expression of this message is seen in that least formal type of all literature—namely, the *letter*—from brother heart to brother heart, telling in lines of tenderest sympathy and love of the claims of the father and the interests and responsibilities of the family. This is the germ out of which it all grew. This is the grain of mustard that has developed into a mighty monarch in the forest of the world's literature, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. And this literature as we have it in its entirety has certain elements of uniqueness.

One of the first marks of uniqueness the New Testament possesses is that *it nowhere betrays a sign of its own existence as a formal volume*. We shall, of course, later come to the historical explanation of this fact. The fact itself is simply stated here. The New Testament seems to be sublimely unconscious of its own existence. Hence it makes no bold claim. On the other hand, like God, its supreme Author, it seems to sit still and silently wait for men to find out by contact with its vital power that it is, indeed, the Word of Truth. The New Testament is the supreme example in literature of one of Christ's original utterances: "He that seeketh to gain shall lose, while he that loseth his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it." And in no other single characteristic does it bear a more lifelike resemblance to its Lord.

If we had no other basis upon which to build our belief in its inspiration, we have one in this wondrous fact. Here is a volume made of paper, bound in boards, printed in ink, subject to all the vicissitudes of literary transmission—a Book made like unto its brethren in

all things, yet always without the sin of making a bold and blatant claim. The written Word, like the incarnate Word, does not "strive nor cry," nor does it "lift up its voice in the street." Like a sheep it has been led many and many a time "to the slaughter" that prejudice and passion have ever provided for innocence and truth; but simply because it is the transcript of the mind of Christ—so far as infinite grace and goodness could be caught in cold letters—one would never know it save by coming in vital contact with it. Surely if words reveal thoughts, we have in the New Testament the words of our Lord and Saviour. For herein do we read the mind of Christ, and herein does that mind affect and mold and transform our minds. For it is by gazing constantly with unveiled eye into the mirror of our New Testament Scriptures that we are gradually changed into the likeness of Him who is the Image of the invisible God.

And this statement of the supreme influence of the New Testament brings us to the next element of uniqueness. This is the *marvelous unity that is manifest in its great diversity*. One cannot fail to feel, if he has any religious sense at all, that there is a great deal in common in the twenty-seven books that make up our New Testament. But at the same time, where will one find greater contrasts? There are contrasts as to *time*. What a wonderful leap of years between 1 Thessalonians, say, and the fourth Gospel! On any count at least a half century. But when we leave years and come to thoughts, the distance is immeasurably increased; for into that fifty years has been crammed the momentum of eternity. There are contrasts as to *length*. One may read Jude in three minutes, while Luke's Gospel would probably take three or four hours. Second John has thirty lines, while Matthew has nearly thirty hundred. There are contrasts as to *importance*. Philemon is a private letter discussing a domestic matter and evidently intended by the writer to be read but once. First Thessalonians is an earnest appeal

from an absent pastor to a flock recently gathered from heathenism, and was written because the writer was not able to come to them in person. First Corinthians is a detailed attempt on the apostle's part to answer numerous and perplexing problems that were vexing the congregations of Christians in a highly cultivated yet sensual city community. Again, there are contrasts as to *style* and *method*. One recalls at once the harshness of Jude and the vigor and pathos of Paul. Furthermore, there are contrasts of mental endowments, of literary skill, of real and vital grasp of the problems in hand. All these may be and have been emphasized. They are patent to any eye that reads even casually the New Testament. And we glory in these contrasts, for they constantly remind us that our New Testament is not mechanical, but vital. It is not a low-lying plain, as has been said—dull, arid, monotonous by reason of all of its contributors occupying the same level of intellectual, moral, and spiritual altitude—but is a varied landscape, now moving in simple narrative, now rolling in grandeur, now leaping in majestic heights, now an abrupt declivity, now a slow, meandering stream, now a rich meadow and a greensward; and over it all, bringing out the individual beauties of each particular phase of the whole, we have ever playing the sunlight of divine wisdom, the light and inspiration of heaven itself, enriching and glorifying the whole horizon and all things contained in its embrace. And it is this light, this celestial glory, that is the common essence of them all. This is the strange alchemy that has wrought unity out of all this seeming diversity. This is the master music that has brought harmony out of these many and at times discrepant, if not discordant, notes. So that what has been said of the fourfold Gospel may with equal truth be applied to the entire New Testament:

“Though one set of facts is stated,
They by each one are related
In a manner all his own.”

“Christ the Source—these streams forth sending.
High the Source—these downward tending,
That they thus a taste transcending
Of life’s Fount to saints may bring!”

This reference to the Gospels brings us to the third mark of the uniqueness of the New Testament. As Jesus holds a unique place among men, so the New Testament holds a *unique place among books*. And it holds this place because it enshrines his character and preserves his teachings. For let us be well assured of this fact: It is the presence and teaching of Jesus Christ that guarantee perpetuity and immortality to this Book. This is seen from the simple consideration that if the Jesus of the Gospel be taken out of the New Testament, if his words, his works, his sufferings, his life be withdrawn, the whole edifice cracks and tumbles to the ground, and instead of the beautiful temple of divine truth built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself as the chief Corner Stone, we have nothing but a miserable pile of crumbling ruins, a chaos of unrelated and unvitalized units mutually antagonistic and mutually destructive. If we extract Christ from this volume, away goes Paul; for he has lost the inspiration of his life. The nerve of his moral fiber has been rudely cut, for it is only through Christ strengthening him that he can do all things. And not only with regard to his own personal experience, but with Christ gone he has no message for his children in the faith. Take Christ away, and away goes his tender message of sympathy to the Thessalonian brethren weeping over the untimely graves of departed loved ones. Away goes the glorious message of the resurrection to the Corinthians: “For if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, and we are found deceivers.” Away goes Galatians. For if in the fullness of time God did not send forth his Son made under the law, then we are still in bondage; there is no “Abba, Father” for our glad hearts to sing; we are fallen from grace

and are yet in our sins. Take Christ away, and away goes Romans, with all its incisive analysis of spiritual need and its eloquent setting of the movement of God's grace. For if the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has not made us free from the law of sin and death, then the mortal combat is still in progress, and there is still pressed from the heart of humanity the despairing cry: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me?" And if Jesus is not at hand to answer, *there is no answer!*

And so with Peter. Can we imagine Simon Peter without Jesus? Peter deserted him once, but he will never do so again. Those two are indissolubly joined; the ages cannot separate them. Extract Jesus's influence and teaching from the New Testament, and Peter's will go too. Let hostile criticism exclude the Christ of the Gospels from the New Testament, and as he departs Peter will meet him with his inevitable "*Quo vadis, Domine?*" And if the reply is, "I go to be crucified again, this time on the cross of a perverse skepticism," we shall again hear the voice of the valiant fisherman of Galilee ring out: "I go with thee, Lord." For while in a large sense Christ built upon Peter, in a still larger sense Peter built upon Christ; and the fundamental source of his life's inspiration is found in the joyful doxology: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

And so of John. Should we ever have had "the heart of Jesus"—as the fourth Gospel has truly been called—had we not first had Jesus himself? Take him away, and the light and life of the beloved disciple depart at once. He has no one to love him and none to love. The branch withers because the vine is gone; the soul famishes because the water of life is withdrawn; the whole nature starves because the bread of heaven has been lost. Darkness and blindness and coldness and

deadness come in rapid and inevitable succession, because the light and warmth and life of men has ceased. Exclude Jesus, the Jesus of the Gospels, the Christ of Paul and Peter and James and John, from the New Testament, and nothing remains save a few deluded and deluding enthusiasts. Instead of that which we have heard and seen with our eyes and our hands have handled, we find ourselves hugging a delusive fancy of our own imaginings. Such a construction of New Testament phenomena is a psychological, a moral, and a spiritual impossibility. The essence, the core, the heart of the New Testament literature is the historic Jesus. He is its supreme Source. Had he not lived and labored and loved, it would never have seen the light. He is its primal occasion, its perennial inspiration, and its constant and abiding glory. For Christianity is not primarily a book religion. It is, first of all, a Life; and it is only because that Life was first lived that it afterwards came to be delineated—first in the minds and hearts of his early followers; then in the oral traditions as these same disciples in loving memory told and retold the old, old story to their converts and their congregations; and, finally, when the voices of those that had heard him grew fewer and fewer by the inroads that death made, this tradition was at length intrusted to frail parchment. But the original writing was on the hearts and in the lives of men. And that original text is still with us. For, in the language of him who wrote certainly the dominating portion of the New Testament, the real Christian Scripture is the truly Christian character, as it reflects the principles incorporated in and inculcated by Jesus our Master. For, says Paul to the Corinthians: "Ye are our epistle, . . . known and read of all."

But back of all these minor epistles stands the great unabridged volume of the Word incarnate of which the written word is but a faint portraiture. For we must confess that with all its greatness the New Testament is but a faint fragment of the entire revelation of God

in Christ. By the time the fourth Gospel was written this fact was recognized. All the books that could be written even by apostolic hands guided by the Holy Spirit could not express to the full the grace of God in Christ Jesus. The heaven of heavens could not contain it; how much less this book! It broke through the confines of the celestial city; it stirred to life the land of Palestine; it burst through the barriers of racial prejudice and won the haughty Roman; it sounded deeper depths and scaled higher heights than philosophy ever dared, and thus won the admiration of the subtle Greek. Later it tamed the fierce spirit of the Anglo-Saxon and thus captured the citadel of civilization for all centuries to come. And to-day the nations beyond the seas, hoary with years, burdened with superstitions, dead in trespasses and sins, are hearing this Voice of the Son of God and leaping forth from the grave of the past and springing into newness of life in Christ Jesus. God has entered into humanity, and the Word has become flesh and is dwelling among us. This is the primal fact, and the inevitable accompaniment of the incarnate Word is the written Word. This for the first century was a side issue—the surplus of the gospel. And in using this term we use no derogatory language, but simply wish to emphasize the place of the person of our Lord in the literature that he has inspired. Surely if the light and purity of perfect humanity was so straitened that it cribbed, cabined, and confined the Lord of glory, much less could pen and parchment encompass him completely. As great as is the Christ of these New Testament pages, the Christ of Galilee, the Christ of Mount Hermon, the Christ of Calvary, the Christ of the upper room, the Christ of the Damascus road, and the Christ of Patmos Isle, reverently may we say, truthfully must we say as we pass from the written to the incarnate Word and thence into the presence of the eternal Word:

"Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Christ, art more than they."

Thought Questions.

1. In approaching the study of the New Testament what four avenues are opened to us? (1) The life. (2) The accidental causes that account for the writing of any of the several books. (3) The cause and process of the consolidation of the several isolated parts into a book. (4) The care and process of transmission.

2. What literary forms do you remember to have found in the New Testament?

3. From a cursory examination of the New Testament would you judge that it came into existence as the result of a studied purpose to produce a complete body of Christian doctrine?

4. Rapidly turning the pages of the New Testament, as you come to each book test your present knowledge of it by asking the question, What were the special occasion and purpose of the writing of this book?

5. What are some of the marks of the uniqueness of the New Testament? (1) Its lack of consciousness of self (2) Unity in diversity. (3) The presence and teaching of Jesus, the living Word, binds together all and pervades and preserves the written Word.

6. Does the New Testament give us a complete picture of the Christ and a full report of his teachings?

II. THE OCCASIONING CAUSE AND THE PRACTICAL PURPOSE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Passages for Daily Readings

Sunday.—The Life-Giving Power of the Life of Jesus. John 6: 29-40.

Monday.—The Self-Evidencing Character of the Life of Jesus. John 6: 41-51.

Tuesday.—Personal Testimony Jesus's Chosen Method of Perpetuating and Diffusing His Gospel. Acts 1: 1-11.

Wednesday.—The Missionary Character of the Gospel Message. Matthew 28: 16-20; John 20: 19-23; Luke 24: 44-49; Mark 16: 19, 20.

Thursday.—The Pervading Life in the Church. John 15: 1-15; 16: 7-16.

Friday.—The Unifying Person in Word and Evidence. John 17: 6-26.

Saturday.—Some Beautiful Hymns Preserved by the Historian of the Gospel. Luke 1: 46-55, 68-79; 2: 29-32.

OUR first study closed with the consideration of the Person and teaching of Jesus as the ruling principle of the New Testament. We begin this study where that one concluded; and when we further press the question, Why have we a New Testament at all? we answer: Because Jesus lived and taught and suffered and died and rose again and, among his last words to his disciples, declared that the Holy Spirit would call to their mind all the things he had said and done and would guide them into all truth. In this simple statement we have the prophecy of all that later came to be recorded in the Gospels and Epistles. Christian experience and the Christian Scriptures have therefore a common parentage in that they are begotten of the Spirit of the living God; hence they have always gone hand in hand. This likewise accounts for the beauty and order of these Scriptures; for the Holy Spirit is the author of order, not of confusion.

Christ's Truth Is Self-Evidencing

Christ brought life and immortality to light in his gospel and made clear the light and imparted the immortality to as many as received him. The truth he brought was self-evidencing. His gospel must stand on the certification that conscience gives it, or it will fall. No mere outward or mechanical buttress can sustain the weight of Christian faith. We are, therefore, prepared at the outset for the reception of the fact that Christ does not seem to have made any provision for reporting his own words. He wrote upon the hearts of his disciples living truths. While he lived on the earth, books were superfluous; when he ascended into heaven, the same truths were illustrated in the lives of his disciples.

Jesus Chose Witnesses, Not Scribes

Hence it was that when Jesus went away all he needed was witnesses to his grace and power. There is no evidence to show that he chose these with any idea of turning them into writers. The world of his day, as well as of ours, was already too much afflicted with "scribal smartness." So these his followers were not called to be writers about him, but witnesses of him. They were not only commissioned to tell men by word of lip; they were also commanded to compel men by deed of life to take knowledge that they had been with him. Furthermore, their previous training had nearly all been in the line of oral discourse. By birth they were simple men with little capacity or inclination for literary work. Coupled with this was the fact that for quite a while the activity of the twelve was confined to Jerusalem, where their personal supervision of the growing Church made written communication unnecessary. A third consideration must have been the expectation of the near return of Jesus. This fact of itself rendered it impossible that these early disciples should have a desire to write for the benefit of coming generations, which on their supposition would never

materialize. Again, so long as these witnesses lived and could get to those who needed instruction there was no need for written intervention. If Paul, for example, had not been hindered from getting to Rome, we may presume that the present letter to that Church would never have been penned. If he had been able to get back to Thessalonica as soon as he wanted to, the first letter to the little flock there would not have been sent. Of course it would not have been misunderstood, and the second letter as we have it need never have been written. These examples are simply cited to illustrate the point that, so far as the occasion of New Testament literature is concerned, the backbone of it—namely, the Epistles—is simply the connecting link between the local Church and the absent apostle. The letter is written simply because they cannot come together in any other way.

The New Testament Books Are Occasional

This brings us at once to recognize the occasional character of the New Testament writings. This means that they came to birth because certain conditions were on. It necessarily follows from this that if the occasions had been different the writings themselves would have differed accordingly. We cannot conceive, however, that the Church would have remained any considerable time without a literature. Still it is easy to see how our New Testament might have been a very different book. Had the heresy of the Galatians and that of the Colossians changed places, the respective rebukes to these renegades would have varied accordingly. And so of other occasions that gave rise to letters. Had Onesimus never run away; or having run away, had he never gone to Rome; or having run away and gone to Rome, had he not found Paul; or having run away and gone to Rome and found the apostle, had he not been converted, his name, forsooth, would in all probability never have been heralded in Christian letters, nor would the aged apostle have had the oppor-

tunity to show so tactfully and so beautifully his exquisite sense of Christian courtesy in the very way in which it shines in this brief note which has been characterized as "a veritable *chef-d'œuvre* of the art of letter-writing." But, let us not forget, Paul would have been just as much a Christian gentleman even though this opportunity for showing it had never presented itself. And this is the base line we wish to work from. We can easily imagine different conditions surrounding our New Testament writings and different occasions calling them forth, but with these externals we should have to stop. We cannot conceive of a different spirit for our New Testament; all the change we can conjure up is in application, not in principle. For the written Word, with all its variety of scene and scope, has ever behind it the Word incarnate, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

The Formal and the Essential

There is usually discoverable in the New Testament books a form which is local and transitory and a spirit which is good for all times and places. It is the latter which gives the books their highest value for successive centuries and that contains for us "the essence of Christianity." Take any of the Epistles of Paul—for example, First Corinthians. No one with any religious sense can for a moment dream of a time when the thirteenth chapter of that letter will abdicate its throne of sovereignty over the human heart. Or the Roman letter. Can we imagine any Christianity that will take us deeper or higher in the realm of Christian experience than the seventh and eighth chapters, or any spirit of unselfishness in Christian service more true and triumphant than that detailed in the twelfth? The religious consciousness of humanity has always responded with an emphatic "No!"

The New Testament but a Part of the Apostolic Writings

Another general characteristic that should be mentioned here is the fragmentary character of our New Testament. It is to be borne in mind that none of the New Testament writers wrote with the conscious purpose of producing a New Testament. Indeed, we here use the term by a leap of anticipation; for the New Testament in our sense of the term was not, but was in the process of becoming. The form of the New Testament, largely letters, suggests that it was designedly the least formal of literary monuments. It certainly does not contain the vast ocean of ideals and impulses set in motion when our earth was blessed with the pressure of the footprints of the Son of Man. Just as the four-fold gospel story, with all its varying points of view, cannot exhaust the content of the character of Christ, so the whole round of books have caught and transmitted for us but a small part of the life and thought of the apostolic days. The literature that survives is always the "fragment of a fragment." What has become of the many gospels to which Luke refers? Of those many private letters that Paul must have written? Of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament, twenty-one are letters; and of these, fourteen (exactly two-thirds) are attributed to Paul. If we omit from this number Hebrews, we have thirteen letters which may be fairly accepted as from his pen. Do these thirteen epistles contain all that Paul ever thought or taught about Christ? The public life of Paul extended over a period of at least twenty-six years. We know that within thirteen or fourteen years he wrote thirteen letters, and that seven of these were written within a period of five years. How much more Paul must have written and taught! If the New Testament books that we have be but the overflow, what must have been the full sweep of the tidal wave of divine life that broke upon the shores of time when the Son of God stood robed in human

garb, spake with a human tongue, felt with a human heart, and out of human eyes sent those gentle but dynamic gleams which have ever since that glad hour proved the dayspring of human hope?

The Foundation Gospel and Its First Literary Expression

Of course it is not our purpose to give in detail at this point an introduction to each of the several books that we find now in our canonical corpus. This task will occupy us through several subsequent studies. All we want to do now is to illustrate in general the two points we have been making with regard to the occasional character and fragmentary condition of the literature it contains. The temple of our New Testament Scriptures was not built in a day, nor did it descend from heaven like the completed city of the Apocalypse, all symmetrical. It is not a mechanism, but an organism. It was not manufactured; it grew. It is a living temple, thus paradoxically illustrating at least two prominent phases: its solidity and harmony and its vitality and inspirational value. Can we not picture to ourselves the process of its construction, at least so far as the early stages are concerned? In the first place, we can rest assured that there was the oral tradition which represented the current of evangelical testimony. This had as its kernel, as even a casual glance at the Gospels and Epistles will show, the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This is "the Gospel" back of the Church itself and back of the New Testament. This was not to be committed to frail papyrus, but to find expression in human lives and be sealed by sacrificial deaths. This could be communicated at its highest only by human testimony orally delivered and ocularily demonstrated. This had its warrant in the example of Jesus. The mystery of godliness must ever be manifested in the flesh. This is the method he charged upon his disciples, and we find them following it faithfully and fearlessly. It is only when the decrees of the

Council of Jerusalem are to be sent out that we see or hear anything of a documentary character issuing from the Church. And this is merely a ruling sent to Gentile brethren coupled with fraternal greetings from the mother Church. No importance is attached to its written form; for the whole sequel shows that this form was regarded as an innovation, since the decree goes forth not alone, but in the hands of two sympathetic men who presumably are to read and interpret its spirit to the scattered Gentile groups. But the land of literature once entered, there was not any possibility of its being deserted.

We are safe in asserting that the first section of our New Testament writings is that designated as Epistles. This is, as we have seen, more or less occasional, and is designed to take the place of personal instruction on the part of the absent apostle. Take, for illustration, the so-called First Epistle to the Corinthians. It seems that a series of questions had been sent by the Church at Corinth to Paul, probably in a letter now lost. Some of these questions we can formulate from his answers—namely: “Where should Christian conscience draw the line in the matter of sex relation?” “How should a Christian act with regard to the eating of meat offered to idols?” “How is the true presence of the Spirit to be recognized?” These and other questions relating to the conduct of a Christian in a corrupt community gave Paul his opportunity to put on record his conception of the social message of Christianity. Possibly these inquirers hardly hoped for more than categorical replies to their several interrogations. Probably they thought that these answers would be given by word of mouth through a messenger. But, fortunately for all after ages, Paul saw at a glance that the great trouble at Corinth was not so much *problems*, either of conduct or of conscience, but rather unconscious ignorance and willful ignorance of the fundamental principles of the gospel itself in its operation in the social sphere. And so while his answers to these questions are in a sense local, yet they enshrine

principles as immortal as truth itself; and, so far as their practical value is concerned, social Christianity after twenty centuries has no clearer consciousness nor stronger platform than this presentation from Paul's pen, wherein he prescribes for the varied ills that afflict the body politic a generous dosage of sympathy, service, and sacrificial love.

The fragmentary character of this correspondence, not only in its original compass, but much more so in that which remains, is sufficiently indicated by referring to 1 Corinthians 5: 9, from which it seems that a letter from Paul to that Church preceded this so-called first; while the tenor of our so-called Second Corinthians seems to necessitate a letter just previous to it and referred to in 2 Corinthians 2: 4, a letter which caused the apostle great anguish to write and the Corinthians great grief to read. Again, unless we embrace the theory that Ephesians is a circular letter, we have to adopt the idea from Colossians 4: 16 that a whole letter has been lost from Paul's pen. If, however, such a letter (that to the Laodiceans) should be found, and if it should authenticate itself both by external and by internal evidence to the consciousness of Christendom, it would be entirely within the province of the Church to incorporate it into the canon. Neither the example of the ante-Nicene fathers nor the spirit of the Reformers could be haled as an obstacle to such a procedure. For it is ever true that while the gospel made the Church, the Church in its turn made both the Gospels and Epistles. The gospel is the source of our life, but the Church is ever the maker of its literature.

The Gospel in the Gospels

This same element of occasional character and fragmentary conditions is characteristic of the second grand division of our New Testament—namely, the Gospel section. While the gospel antedates the Epistles, the Gospels are subsequent thereto. The Church is first founded by evangelistic testimony, then grounded in

evangelic tradition. The logical order in the New Testament is, first, the life that Christ gives, then the life that Christ lived. The one is the theme of apostolic preaching, both oral and epistolary; the other the subject of evangelic exposition. But we must ever believe that it is the life in Christ that is the basis of the believer's interest in the life of Christ. With this caveat we recognize from the start a great body of traditional matter relative to the life and teaching of Jesus. At what time it began to be formulated in documents we cannot dogmatically decide. Certainly it is huge enough at the time of the writing of the Fourth Gospel to justify the hyperbole: "Even the world would not contain the books that should be written." And even when we approach our earliest Gospel we find that it is by no means an innovation; it is presumably a successor to a line of antecedents that covers more or less completely the distance in space between Jerusalem and Rome, and in time between the death of Jesus and the destruction of the Jewish State. Possibly the first cycle of evangelic tradition which we can put our hands upon is that embodied in our Second Gospel—Mark—together with the contents of a document which recent criticism has exhumed from the pages of Luke and Matthew and to which reference is made under the symbol Q. The resurrection of the corpse of Q has been due to the critical skill of modern scholarship. But Mark has ever been with us, at least since the days of the early fathers. One of these ancient worthies, Papias, as reported by the historian Eusebius, has this to say with regard to the belief of his time:

Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatever he remembered, not, however, recording in order what was either said or done by Christ; for he was neither a hearer nor a follower of the Lord. But later, as I said, he followed and heard Peter, whose custom was to adapt his teaching to the needs of the occasion, but not with any purpose of giving a connected account of the Lord's words. So that Mark made no mistake in writing some things as he

remembered them, for he made it a point of special care not to omit anything he heard or to falsify a whit. (Eusebius's History, 2: 39.)

This tradition is again given in a more elaborate form by Eusebius in another place in his History (2: 15):

So greatly, however, did the light of piety enlighten the minds of Peter's hearers that it was not sufficient to hear but once or to receive the unwritten teaching of the divine preaching, but with all manner of entreaties they importuned Mark, whose Gospel we have, and who was a follower of Peter, that he should leave them in writing a memorial of the teaching which had been orally communicated to them. Nor did they cease until they had prevailed with the man, and thus became the cause of that writing which is called the Gospel of Mark. They say also that the apostle [Peter], having learned what had been done—the Spirit having revealed it to him—was pleased with the zeal of the men and authorized the work for use by the Churches.

If our traditional conception of the New Testament Scriptures causes us to rebel at all this and look upon it as mere later legend, what are we to do with the state of the case as outlined in one of our accepted Gospels? Luke in his preface states some things which are germane to the approach we moderns must make to our New Testament Gospels. We are all familiar with the form of his preface, but have we taken in its full significance as a guide to gospel composition? It reads in the American Revised text: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus; that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed." (Luke 1: 1-4.)

Now, without going into any exhaustive investigation of all that is implied in this graceful introduction,

acknowledged by experts to be as classic as anything Demosthenes himself ever penned, each one of these four verses contains an interesting item. Verse one states that there were in Luke's time "many" who were so impressed by the transcendent interest of the Christian movement as to draw up narratives of its rise and progress. In the second verse we have it distinctly affirmed that these narratives were based ultimately upon autoptic testimony, while at the same time it is clearly inferred that the writer of our Third Gospel does not claim to be any closer to the source than the second generation. The third verse gives his qualifications for his task. As he sees them, these lie in the fact that he has "traced the course of all things accurately from the first." These criteria are important. His knowledge was comprehensive in scope and accurate in detail. This constitutes his credentials as a historian; and he does not betray the slightest suspicion that his writing is going to differ a whit from that of the "many" save in so far as these characteristics continue to be his. In the fourth verse he emphasizes the end he has in view: "That thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed." Theophilus is a catechumen, doubtless a Gentile convert. He has been taught many things—possibly contradictory things—concerning his recently accepted religion. He needs to know. His heart cries out: "How can I, except some man should guide me?" And Luke, the beloved physician, finds leisure in the midst of his busy professional life to snatch time and give to Theophilus and to all the world the most universally human of all our Gospels—the Gospel of infancy and old age, of women and children, of publican and prodigal, of social outcasts and religious renegades, of earth and heaven, wherein the jangling discords of human strife mingle freely with the music of angelic hosts—who save the beloved physician, whose profession led him through the whole gamut of human relationships, and whose providential lot was to serve as companion and comforter to Paul, the

herald of a gospel as comprehensive as the race itself—who save this man with these resources and with this spirit could have written this work, “the most beautiful book that ever was penned”?

The Missionary Basis of the New Testament

And mention of the universality of the gospel brings us to the final explanation of all these occasional writings. And this is that they are the outcome of the missionary attitude and activity of early Christianity. The New Testament Scripture is born out of obedience to the last command, the product of the union of divine fullness and human need. This is ever the genesis of Scripture, the invasion of the human realm of sin and self by the ever-expanding energy of the Spirit of the living God. And so the New Testament is a monument to the missionary spirit and success of the infant Church. Back of every page of it is the unwritten record of selfishness conquered, character transformed, sin and Satan vanquished. This volume as a whole or in any of its parts had never been at all save for the necessities and occasions thrust upon the apostles by reason of their missionary zeal and evangelistic enterprise. Had the Church not heeded the divine command and separated Barnabas and Saul to the work whereunto they had been called, where had been the letters to the Thessalonians, Philippians, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, or any of that noble list that, in its geographical extent, sweeps all the way from the shores of the Pontus to the banks of the Tiber? Had the Church not gone forth into the “regions beyond,” touching Jews, Romans, Greeks, the world, where had been the ever-developing stream of our gospel tradition, suiting each several section of our common humanity as it emerges to the consciousness of the Church? So we find the missionary impulse lying at the basis of our whole New Testament record. Starting with the book of Matthew, which sets in the forefront the Jewish genealogy and gives a somewhat nar-

row channel to the current of our Lord's life, it passes on through Mark, the Roman Gospel, and Luke, the Greek Gospel, to John, the racial. And in the Acts the graphic tale is continued. A new beginning is made in Jerusalem, only to set in motion a movement that is destined to flow out into the surrounding hills of Judea, pervade Palestine with its beneficent influence, and finally forge its victorious way to the heart of the capital of the empire. The Epistles then take up the great missionary conception incarnate in Christ and bring its wondrous message to bear on the world of human thought, fighting its way through Roman ridicule, Corinthian impurity, Galatian fickleness, Colossian narrowness, and Ephesian idolatry until in the majestic roll of apocalyptic vision the city of our God, dwarfing by its celestial magnificence all the greatness and glory of the nations and kings and tribes of earth, like a newly arrayed bride comes down out of heaven, having "the glory of God for its light, and nations of them that are saved to walk in it."

Look at the first verse of the New Testament and contrast its scope and outlook with that of the last. That first verse reads: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." That last verse reads: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints." In the light of these two statements—one narrow, national, earthly, the other as broad as the sea of humanity and as heavenly as the grace of God in Christ can make it—who can deny that the New Testament, though born of occasions many and varied, though fragmentary and frequently local, still is permeated by the Spirit of God, illustrative of the mind of Christ, and in its constant answering to the ever-growing demands of the Church proves itself to be the breathing of the Holy Ghost?

And so while we do well to remember the occasional and fragmentary character of our New Testament, as contended for in this study, we must never forget the eloquent estimate given by Dr. Philip Schaff:

Tracts for the times—they are tracts for all time, children of the fleeting moment—they contain truths of infinite moment. They compress more ideas in fewer words than any other writings. They discuss the highest themes that can challenge an immortal mind. And all this before humble little societies of poor, uncultured artisans, freedmen, slaves! And yet they are of more value to the Church than all the systems of theology from Origen to Schleiermacher—yea, than all the confessions of faith. For eighteen hundred years they have nourished the faith of Christendom and will continue to do so till the end of time. This is the best evidence, the supreme demonstration of their divine inspiration.

Thought Questions

1. Why have we a New Testament at all?
2. What presumptions were there against the probability of the writing of such a body of literature as we have in the New Testament? What dominant occasion for the writing?
3. What proportion of the literary product of the Apostolic Church would you suppose to have been preserved in the twenty-seven books of the New Testament? Have we evidence that any of the letters and gospel narratives have been lost or, if not lost, left out of our New Testament?
4. Which would you consider the more appropriate metaphor for describing the process of the becoming of the New Testament—that of growth or that of building?
5. Can you distinguish between the gospel and its literary expression?
6. From the book itself what do you learn to have been the occasion of the writing of the third Gospel? and from the writings of Eusebius, what the occasion of the writing of the second Gospel?
7. How are the missionary impulse and program related to the writing of the New Testament?
8. Your attention has been called to the variable and circumstantial in the New Testament writings: what are the constant, the essential, the unifying factors?

III. THE LETTERS TO THESSALONIANS AND GALATIANS

Passages for Daily Readings

Sunday.—The Founding of the Church at Thessalonica. Acts 17: 1-9; 18: 5.

Monday.—The Motive for the Writing of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. 1 Thessalonians 3.

Tuesday.—Pastoral Teachings Concerning Purity, Brotherly Love, Diligence, the Hope of the Lord's Coming. 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5.

Wednesday.—A Misunderstanding of the Apostle's Teaching Corrected. 2 Thessalonians 2.

Thursday.—Paul and the Judaizing Controversy. Acts 15: 1-29.

Friday.—The Originality and Authority of Paul's Gospel. Galatians 1: 11-2: 10.

Saturday.—Faith Versus Works; the Gospel Versus Law. Galatians 3: 1-29.

HAVING set before our minds the primal cause of the New Testament and given a cursory glance at the general occasions that precipitated it, we are now ready to take our stand at some vantage point and view the various elements as they gradually arise and finally marshal themselves into compact array. The place in the New Testament itself to begin the study of this phase of our subject is the section known as the Pauline Letters; and the place geographically is the city of Corinth. We must never forget these two things: First, the inexpressible debt that Christianity owes to Paul from the standpoint of his double work as evangelist and educator; and, secondly, that the New Testament had its birthplace on European and not Asiatic soil.

Two points should be noted as introductory to any consideration of Paul's writings—viz.:

Their value as literature. Paul's second missionary

journey has two outstanding characteristics. In the first place, it was during this venture of faith that he entered Europe; and the coming of Christianity to this new continent was a thing of world-wide import. In the second place, it was on this journey that he entered another continent, the Continent of Letters. Here, even more than in the other instance, is a fact of tremendous significance. It is not going too far to assert that the thirteen epistles of Paul constitute one of the most remarkable literary outputs history knows. Whether we view them in the light of the occasions that called them forth, or from the standpoint of the logic and fire they themselves contain, or in the matter of their after effects on individuals and the Church at large, the statement remains true that no phase of literature brings to our notice a more interesting or influential list of writings than those whose author was the apostle to the Gentiles.

Their missionary motive. These letters are all written to Churches in Gentile centers or to individuals who have their home and work there. The finest and fullest interpretation of the gospel has always been reached on the background of a lost world. So it is not strange that the New Testament starts on the threshold of that veritable hellhole of ancient heathenism, the city of Corinth; and from this, the very brink of perdition itself, begin to gush forth the first rivulets of that mighty current of gracious truth which will ultimately purify the world. Hence these writings stand as the imperishable monument to the missionary zeal of the early Church. In fact, had not the underlying principle of foreign missions been thoroughly recognized, we should scarcely have had a New Testament at all. Certainly we should not now be studying these masterpieces of Paul's pen and heart. For all of them have as their occasioning cause and permanent inspiration the fact that the gospel has been successfully planted on heathen soil; and they are occupied for the most part with the questions and problems sprung by the fact that the Christians to

whom they are directed are seeking to hold up the Christian ideal "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation."

Four Groups of Pauline Letters

The thirteen epistles are usually grouped in four divisions: First there come what are called the Missionary Epistles (1 and 2 Thessalonians); second, the four Controversial Epistles (Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans); the third group consists of the four epistles written during the two years of Paul's first Roman imprisonment (Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Philippians); the fourth and last group is that known as the Pastorals, of which 1 Timothy and Titus were written after his first Roman captivity; and 2 Timothy, the last product of his pen, issuing from the Roman dungeon just before Paul's martyrdom, constitutes an eloquent and fitting farewell—his valedictory to earthly scenes and sufferings, and at the same time the joyful salutatory in which he greets the coming glory of those who win the victor's crown.

We shall take up these writings in the order indicated and, as far as our limitations permit, will try to tell the story of their birth.*

I. THE LETTERS TO THESSALONICA

Introduction

It was in the midst of his second missionary journey that Paul first visited Thessalonica and was able to plant the gospel in that famous city. The account

*It would be well for those who follow this narrative to make an outline of each letter. The following method may be used to advantage: Take an American Revised Version or any good paragraph Bible and, after reading carefully the different sections, try to characterize the contents of each division in one's own words. This will serve two purposes, aside from being a very valuable exercise. It will prove one of the best ways to master the contents of the letters, and at the same time will give one a first-hand approach to Paul's style and manner of thinking.

of this event is given in the seventeenth chapter of Acts, which in itself gives one a splendid survey of the conditions incident to the founding of a Christian community in a hostile territory. In this chapter we are told of Paul's entrance into the city and of his experience in preaching for three weeks in the Jewish synagogue. His success led to the movement headed by jealous Jews who, in company with certain riffraff of the city, assailed the house in which Paul was supposed to be hiding. Disappointed in venting their rage on the arch-offender—as they regarded Paul—they did the next meanest thing and prevailed upon the rulers to exact bond of Jason not to harbor these disturbers of the settled order. With the ban of the civil government heavy upon them, the Christians at once saw that it would be better for the missionaries to move on to Berea. Here they had at-first a more favorable reception. But soon the news of this signal growth reached Thessalonica, and Jewish hate procured Paul's banishment from this city also. He did not stop for any work until he reached Athens. It was here that his thoughts and longings began to wander back to Macedon; and so greedy was his heart after his young converts that he made at least two unsuccessful attempts to return to them. He knew that they were exposed to fierce persecution from without, and he knew also that his stay had been so short that their grasp of Christian principles was by no means as strong or as comprehensive as he desired. So, as any true father, he longs to know the state of their case and is eager to the point of distraction to be sure of their steadfastness in Christ.

The Occasion of the Writing of 1 Thessalonians

The place to begin the study of the *occasion of this letter* is in the first paragraph of the third chapter. He here affirms that so consuming was his desire to get in touch with them that he was willing to be left to handle the situation at Athens all alone, if so be

that by sending Timothy he might assuage his own anxiety and at the same time assure their hearts and establish them in the faith. His great fear was that, owing to the pressure of persecution and the innocence of immaturity, the tempter had tempted them successfully and all his labor might be in vain. So Timothy was sent, and Paul was left alone at Athens. He soon wearied of his lonesomeness and lack of success in this city and pushed on to Corinth, where he met such staggering odds that his courage failed him utterly, and he was about to leave in absolute defeat and despair. Just about this time, however, Timothy returned and brought him the glad news that the Thessalonians were proving steadfast in the Lord.

The Encouragement of Success

It was a veritable gospel to Paul. It brought him to life again, as he says; for the only gospel that can prove a tonic to the preacher is the conviction that his message is effective in winning and holding men for God. Who shall say how much Paul's heartening for his task at Corinth and his subsequent success there hinged on the report that greeted his anxious inquiries concerning Thessalonica? For he would certainly argue that the gospel which could succeed in transforming the people there—steeped as they were in centuries of superstition and sin that flowed down the slopes of Mount Olympus, the holy (?) mountain of European heathenism, at whose base this new society had gained a solid footing—that such a gospel should not shrink from assaulting even the pit of hell that the Corinth of that day was! As these incidents do not necessitate any great length of time, we are safe in saying that the first letter was written within a very few months of his initial visit. This accounts for the vividness with which in the second chapter he portrays his behavior among them, and also for the emphasis which in the first chapter he gives to the impression their conversion made throughout the contiguous provinces of Greece.

Paul's appreciation of a strategic center was too great for him to minimize the importance of this Church. For in it he saw the true God battling against the false; he saw Christ's challenge to Zeus; he saw in epitome the age-long conflict between the powers of light and the powers of darkness. No wonder his heart thrilled as he heard Timothy recount the story of their steadfast faith, their heroic suffering, and their undimmed hopes.

The Question Concerning Those Who Have Died

But with all these messages of comfort Timothy brought back *a question that was troubling these people*. And it is important for us to discover this question in order to appreciate some portions of the first letter and the reason that underlies the second.

It seems possible to gather the problem of these people from what Paul says in the thirteenth to fifteenth verses of the fourth chapter. There he seems to say that they are unduly perplexed concerning the fate of their dead or dying loved ones. It seems that they had got the impression that Christ would come while all the believers were alive. Some were dead—it may be that they had given up their lives under persecution—others were dying. The question was: Are those to miss anything or lose anything by not being in the flesh when the Lord descends? Paul's answer to this question is quite clear. Instead of missing anything, the dead in Christ will rise *first*; those left behind shall in no wise precede them. The basis of this statement is that faith *unites* men with Christ both here and hereafter—a deep definition and explication of personal experience which Paul develops later in Romans. Here he simply states it as the ground of his unshakable conviction that God will bring with Jesus all “who fell asleep in him.”

2 Thessalonians

So the answer to their perplexity was plain; but in his answer Paul used an expression which seems to have led to a misunderstanding of his absolute meaning,

and from this arose the necessity for a second letter following close on the heels, we may say, of the first. This expression is in the fifteenth verse of the fourth chapter and reads: "We that are alive." On the basis of the ambiguity of Paul's "we" arises *the necessity for the second letter*, which has for its purpose the correction of the impression they had got with regard to the nearness of Christ's coming. He declares that this manifestation of Christ will be antedated by at least two great events—a great apostasy and a revelation of the man of sin—and even this second waits upon another influence, for *he* will not be revealed until what Paul calls "the Restrainer" shall be removed. All this may be dark mystery instead of revelation to us, but it is matter of congratulation that the recipients knew more about these subtle hints than we do. The matter had been to some extent expounded by word of mouth during Paul's visit. He has only to recall to their memory what had been formerly told them (2: 5). So they had a background for the understanding of these "dark sayings" of which time has robbed us completely. We can only speculate as to what really was in the apostle's mind; but even so we cannot fail to admire this splendid answer to the feverish fanaticism that had taken possession of these fledglings in the faith. In this kind yet strong letter he calls them back to soberness and industry, to that calmness of soul which true faith ever inspires, and to that life of continued well-doing which is the only legitimate fruitage of the Christian profession.

The General Impression

As to this, we see illustrated all through these letters the power of the gospel when embodied in a Christlike man to save people, however far they may be from God, and to perpetuate its ideals amid surroundings, however unpropitious. We can hardly see this more clearly than unpropitious. We can hardly see this more clearly than anity exemplified by these Thessalonian converts. In

spite of the fact that for centuries they had been idolaters, the gospel call comes to them with its high ideal; and in response to its imperial appeal they turn to the living God. They accept the gospel; they imitate the apostles of Christ and the Churches of Judea in suffering persecution for righteousness' sake; they become examples of the continent of Europe; they bring forth the fruits of Christian living; they have implanted in their hearts the imperishable hope of a glorious resurrection; and, finally, they become a great missionary center from which echoes forth the message of redemption to all the regions round about. Surely such a Church is well worthy of letters from an inspired apostle and doubly worthy of our deep study and most earnest imitation.

II. THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

Introduction

It is worth while to notice right at the beginning of our studies in Paul's writings that each letter presents one or more additional phase or phases of the apostle's many-sided character. If the Thessalonian correspondence emphasizes Paul as an evangelist and pastor, that to the Churches of Galatia throws into bold relief his argumentative skill and controversial qualities; though it, like all his letters, is shot through with all the intense love and devotion of his nature. This epistle is the first of the great quaternion called by our German friends and foes alike the Haupt-Briefe, or Head Letters. These four constitute the second group and are occupied mainly with the problems sprung by reason of the Judaistic controversy. For this reason it is well to study carefully what the book of Acts has to say about this epoch in Paul's life, and also to consult some handbook, such as Stalker's or Gilbert's, in order to get a larger horizon than is possible in these few paragraphs.

However, the epistle itself is self-declaratory as to its purpose and spirit. It is one of the most virile

pieces of writing that ever fell from a human pen. It is Paul in epitome. In fact, no letter he ever wrote, save 2 Corinthians, gives us such a clear and convincing view of his character as a defender of the faith and of his own rights and authority as an apostle. For these two elements run through the whole letter. Paul is issuing his *apologia pro vita sua*. To defend the gospel is to defend *his* gospel; for there is but *one*, and he has that. But to defend his gospel is to assert his originality; it was received directly from Christ and transmitted by word of mouth and deed of life by him to his converts.

Date and Destination

These two points are inextricably interwoven; and, unfortunately, no consensus of opinion exists even among the greatest scholars. In answering the question, Who are the people whom Paul addresses in this epistle? two main replies are heard. Some master students maintain that they are the people whom Paul evangelized on his first missionary journey in and around Pisidian Antioch and Lystra. Other scholars just as great hold that they were people living in the cities of Ancyra, Pessinus, and Tavium, in the upper part of Central Asia Minor.

As to the date, if one adopts the North Galatian theory, the letter could not have been written anterior to the third missionary journey, and the probable place of writing is Ephesus. On the Southern theory it could hardly have been written at a later date than the close of the second journey or the opening days of the third. The reason for both these views is found in the same passage (4: 13), where Paul limits his visits at the time of writing to *two*. On our conception the date and place of writing point to Antioch in Syria during the time between the second and third missionary journeys. This makes the second chapter of special significance and at the same time suggests that Paul's experience with Mark has given him an opportunity to sharpen his stick for all renegades of whatever sort or degree. It

also shows Paul holding firmly to the principles which the recent General Conference at Jerusalem had so clearly set forth and commissioned him along with others to promulgate. In spite of this, however, it is but fair to say that some few scholars, including Theodor Zahn, the Coryphæus of German conservatism, maintain that Galatians is the *first* of all Paul's letters, while one or two erratic geniuses decide that it was not written until the time of the Roman captivity.

Its Occasion and Contents

However much critics may argue about the date and destination of this letter, any plain reader can compass its occasion and contents. The whole tenor of the writing postulates the existence of a regular propaganda of the Judaizers, the business of which was to dog the footsteps of Paul, harry his newly gathered converts, and seek by all sorts of insinuation, misrepresentation, and prevarication to uproot his authority and proselyte his followers. This party had received a defeat at the Jerusalem council. It had also received a stinging rebuke at Antioch. Such a double drubbing—one in the capital city of Jewish Christianity, the other in the capital city of Gentile Christianity—ought to have ended their labors. But no. They pounced with all the fury of their unsatisfied jealousy upon the unsuspecting flock in the wilds of Galatia and by a conscienceless mixture of hypocritical and hypercritical assumption and presumption so poisoned the minds of Paul's spiritual children as well-nigh to wean them from their father's loving embrace. Nay, more. By a specious emphasis on Mosaic ceremonialism they had well-nigh loosed their grip on the gospel of grace. Their faith in Christ was nearly gone. Having begun in the Spirit, they were now occupying the ridiculously tragic attitude of seeking perfection by way of the flesh.

Such a condition was a clarion call for urgent and aggressive action. The apostle sprang to the issue and gave forth his mind in an epistle that has proved as

epochal in the history of Christianity as the English Magna Charta or the American Declaration of Independence has in the history of human liberty. Indeed, one of the most illuminating characterizations it has earned is "The Emancipation Proclamation of Early Christianity."

The letter has three sections corresponding roughly with chapters one and two, which are mainly *personal*; chapters three and four, which constitute the *polemical portion*; and chapters five and six, which may be generally described as *practical exhortations*. Of course there are interlappings among the parts—transition paragraphs that form the connecting links between the sections.

Personal Section

In the personal section *Paul defends his apostolic call and authority* and stoutly asseverates his originality as a gospel preacher. Indeed, omitting his usual paragraph of gratitude, he plunges into a bold assertion of the uniqueness of the message he heralds and defies men and angels to preach any other. In answer to the insinuations that his enemies had sown in the minds of his converts, casting suspicion on him as a mere understudy of the primal apostles at Jerusalem, he enters into a minute proof that he never had any contact with them, either before or after his conversion, that would in the slightest degree warrant their aspersion. He had *none at all* before his conversion. *They* were going the other way, fleeing from Saul the persecutor, not seeking to lead him to Christ. And as for the meetings he had had with them since the event, an accurate analysis justified the assertion that all such contact had simply revealed either his *equality with* them or his *superiority to* them in his grasp of the essence of the gospel. Hence his solid conviction is that he did not receive his message from men as a source, nor through any man as a channel, nor at the hands of any man as a teacher; but it came to him through the revelation of Jesus Christ. Here he stands immovably planted on the solid ground of a personal apprehension of the risen Lord.

Polemical Section

Chapters three and four are taken up with *defending the doctrine of grace over against the vicious leaven of Jewish legalism* set to work in their midst by the errorists. The argument of this section is clear and cogent. He runs the whole gamut of proof; he appeals to the facts of their conversion, the word of Scripture, the history of Abraham, the analogy of human institutions, and the nature of faith itself. The whole sum and substance of this section goes to show that *law* can never be the last word God has for men. Sinai is not a finality; it is a temporary halting place on the road to Calvary. Slavery must give way to sonship. Law fulfills its function when it brings us face to face with our need of Christ; and his conclusion is that reversion from Christian freedom and the spiritual deliverance which it brings is to "fall from grace" and to become entangled in a yoke of bondage all the more grievous. No wonder Paul rages at times against those who had perverted his children; no wonder he chides these most severely; no wonder at times he scathingly satirizes their folly; no wonder he beseeches them with tears; no wonder this letter drips with his heart's blood and is surcharged with the militant spirit of this defender of the faith as no other that has dropped from his pen.

Practical Section

In chapters five and six Paul gives us *the heart of the gospel as practically applied in Christian conduct*. The keynote of the gospel is *freedom*. But it delivers us from the bondage of law that it may put us in subjection to the bondage of love. It is in these paragraphs that the real gospel is seen. "Love one another," "Walk by the Spirit," "Forgive one another," "Bear each other's burdens," "Be generous," "Do good"—these are the permanent proofs of the Christian faith. Here it is that Christians of all climes and centuries have fed on those great principles that have enabled them to bring forth

abundantly the fruit of the Spirit and have ever had presented to them the highest ideal of Christian character.

Small wonder is it that this short letter has ever been the bulwark of Protestantism, the banner of evangelical freedom that all the great spirits have followed. No wonder Luther declared that he was betrothed to it and called it his Catherine von Borah.

The world could afford to lose many of its libraries, and the Church could afford to shelve many of its creeds and conciliar pronouncements, but both would be woefully impoverished by the loss of this precious document; for this is the ever-flowing fountain to which the thirsty souls of men will ever come and, drinking of its pure waters, will rise refreshed and go forth emboldened to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ did set them free.

Thought Questions

1. Where and when did the New Testament have its birth, and what were the earliest of its writings?
2. Illustrate the two points that must be considered as introductory to a consideration of the writings of Paul—namely, their literary quality and their missionary motive.
3. Trace upon the map and get clearly fixed in memory Paul's three great missionary journeys.
4. Into what four groups are the thirteen letters of Paul divided?
5. What are the chief teachings of the first letter to the Thessalonian Church?
6. What is the design of the second letter to the Thessalonians?
7. What is the subject of controversy in the letter to the Galatians?
8. What two principal views of the date, place of writing, and location of the Church addressed in the letter to the Galatians are held?
9. Give an analysis of the letter to the Galatians, briefly outlining the matter of each of its three principal parts.
10. With what two great political documents may we compare the letter to the Galatians?

IV. THE EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS AND TO THE ROMANS

Passages for Daily Readings

Sunday.—Paul at Corinth. Acts 18: 1-21; 20: 1-6; 1 Corinthians 2: 1-5; 6: 9-11.

Monday.—A Plea for Christian Unity. 1 Corinthians 1: 10-31.

Tuesday.—Some Rebukes. 1 Corinthians 5: 1-8; 6: 1-8, 12-20.

Wednesday.—The Calling and Character of the Christian Minister. 2 Corinthians 4: 1-18; 5: 11-6: 13.

Thursday.—Paul's Providential Way to Rome. Romans 1: 8-15; 15: 22-26; Acts 25: 6-12; 28: 16-30.

Friday.—The Spiritual Gospel Triumphant. Romans 8.

Saturday.—The Golden Fruits of Grace in Practical Living. Romans 12.

Introduction

No portion of the New Testament is fraught with more interest to the Church at large or is more thrilling in the fascination it has for the individual reader than Paul's letters to Corinth, the metropolis of Greece, and to Rome, the "Mistress of the World." The very fact that he should have had the occasion or the daring to address either city is in itself well-nigh a miracle in the world of literary venture; but when we pass from the bare fact to the form and matter of these documents, we are scarcely less than astounded at the marvelous revelations these letters make as to the writer himself. For it is in these matchless writings that we seem to get somewhat into the neighborhood of the greatness of the apostle to the Gentiles. Here we see as never before so clearly his comprehensive grasp of Christianity as a world force both from the standpoint of its social application (First Corin-

thians) and from its being the key to the philosophy of history (Romans). And not only so, but, so far as the apostle's own character is concerned, with all that may be gathered elsewhere, one has hardly got acquainted with the many variant phases of his wonderfully complex personality till one has studied most carefully what has come down to us under the caption of Second Corinthians. For this is indeed the most personal of all of Paul's writings. Here we have the heart of the man laid bare to the gaze of both friend and foe alike; here we see the surgings of his impetuous soul as nowhere else; here we hear his sighs and groans and rasping sarcasm and jubilant notes of joy—and all through we meet with passages that have been penned in his heart's blood. This Corinthian and Roman correspondence may fitly be studied together under the title of "Letters to and from Corinth," and it is this word "Corinth" that is the word of emphasis. We cannot understand the Corinthian epistles save in the light of the conditions of their recipients. Nor can we understand the Roman letter in certain of its great sections save as we take our place by the side of Paul in Corinth and literally see him draw his pen sketch of human depravity contained in the first and second chapters of that immortal work, and so understand how it is that upon the dark background of human need he flings this glorious masterpiece of divine sufficiency. We take up these writings, so far as we can, in their chronological order.

Paul at Corinth

Unfortunately, the critics have not yet entirely cleared up the confusion that hangs over Paul's contact with Corinth. No event was more epochal in his life nor more significant in the development of his gospel and its application to human conditions than his entrance, about 50 A.D., into the Græco-Roman capital. This great city, along with Athens, Alexandria, and Tarsus, stood in the forefront as the exponent of Greek life

and thought. In B.C. 146 the Roman Mummius had destroyed old Corinth. But the natural situation was too inviting to be left long unused, so just one century later Julius Cæsar had refounded the city and given it very largely over to his veterans. However, in Paul's time Greek influence was fairly dominant, at least in commercial and cultural and, to a large extent, in religious circles. At any rate, Paul early saw in this city, formerly called the "Eye of Greece," a strategic center for the intrenchment of Christianity. His entrance, however, was not propitious. He had been driven out from Thessalonica and Berea; he had had scant success in Athens; and in this frame of mind, oppressed by persecution and depressed by a sense of failure, he came to this most wickedly corrupt city known in the whole range of the Roman world. Not only is this tragic fact borne in upon us as we read his letters to them, but the secular literature of that day bankrupts language in its effort to depict the unutterable depravity of this old-time cesspool of sin. But the daring heart of the brave apostle ventured into even this mouth of hell; and though for a time the sight and the strength of Satan forced him to falter, in the end Christ's presence cheered him, and he was constrained by the love of his Lord to spend something like a year and a half there gathering into the fold of Christian fellowship many of the people whom God had in that city. At the conclusion of this period Gallio, the brother of Seneca, came into office as Proconsul of Achaia; and the Jews, doubtless hoping that he would be glad to curry favor with them, stirred up persecution against Paul. But Gallio with true Roman scorn refused to meddle at all with what he regarded as the petty quarrel of a set of religious fanatics, and so drove them out of court. Paul stayed some days longer and then set sail for Syria in company with Priscilla and Aquila, with whom he had made his home on his arrival and whom he had doubtless gathered in as some of the first fruits of the wonderful harvest of that ripe and broad-extending field.

The Corinthian Correspondence

This much with regard to Paul's first or foundation visit to Corinth is fairly certain. But when we take up the matter of his subsequent contact, either through letter or visit, we at once meet with much perplexity. One of the most satisfactory outlines, at least to this writer, seems to be that arrived at by the combination and comparison of various data supplied by the letters we have. As this is ready to hand, we shall tabulate the references and let the reader draw his own conclusions.

And first as to Paul's letters to this Church. How many times did he address communications to them? The answer to this question is supplied by the correspondence we have. If we refer to *our* First Corinthians 5: 9, we there read: "I wrote to you in my letter to have no company with fornicators." This they had evidently misunderstood, and from Paul's subsequent sentences we infer that they had willfully twisted his words. Now, this characterization does not apply to the letter in which the words stand. Consequently we infer that our First Corinthians is not Paul's first letter to that Church. In other words, a few months subsequent to his first visit he had occasion to write to them, rebuking them for their dallying with the sin so rampant in their city. This letter has been lost entirely, unless a stray leaf from it has survived in Second Corinthians 6: 14-7: 1. By turning to this passage any one can see that it violently breaks the connection between 6: 13 and 7: 2, and its contents answer admirably the description Paul gives of his former communication. So from this our First Corinthians should be Second Corinthians. But this is not all with regard to the letters. If we turn to our Second Corinthians 7: 8, 9, we see there a reference to a letter which Paul wrote that caused them great grief; and if we turn to chapter 2: 3, 4, we are there told that it was written in great grief and through many tears on the part of Paul. What letter is this? Certainly not the "previous" letter,

nor our First Corinthians, nor even our Second Corinthians, so far as its major part is concerned. But there is a section in our second letter (chapters 10: 1-13: 10) the contents and tone of which are entirely out of keeping with the rest of the epistle, and many there are who find here a part at least of what we will call the "painful" letter, otherwise lost to us. So that in the correspondence that has survived between Paul and this Church there must have passed at least four letters; and it is possible that we have, in addition to two entire letters (the second and fourth), excerpts from two others, the first and third.

In like manner by reference to the visits reported in this correspondence. There was one, the "foundation" visit referred to in First Corinthians 2: 1, and there is the intended visit referred to in Second Corinthians 13: 1. This last is referred to as "the third," hence there must have been another which Acts does not mention. It is hinted at very early in Second Corinthians 2: 1, where he says: "I made up my mind that I would not come again to you in sorrow." It was during this visit that Paul's words, here and elsewhere, seem to indicate that he was forced to submit to gross personal insult at the hands of some one man whose rebellion against his authority he was unable to quell, and so the outcome of this visit was defeat for the apostle. It is not possible to decide whether this visit antedated our first letter or succeeded it. My own opinion is that it succeeded this letter and was itself succeeded by the "painful" letter, part of which we find in the last four chapters of our Second Corinthians. So that our construction of Paul's contact, both epistolary and personal, with this city can be seen in the following tabulation:

1. The foundation visit. (Acts 18: 1.)
2. The letter referred to in First Corinthians 5: 9, a leaf of which we may read in Second Corinthians 6: 14-7: 1.
3. His contact with "those of Chloe's household" (1 Cor. 1: 11) and the deputation consisting of Fortunatus,

Stephanas, and Achaicus (1 Cor. 16: 17), who doubtless brought to him a letter of inquiry, and this is the occasion on which he writes our First Corinthians.

4. The "painful" visit paid quickly to bring about unity with regard to some flagrant breach of discipline. This ended disastrously for the apostle, and he was forced to withdraw baffled.

5. The letter written in tears and grief, part of which we have in Second Corinthians 10: 1-13: 10.

6. The final letter of our series, Second Corinthians 1-9, written especially to commemorate Paul's thanksgiving over the happy outcome of affairs, to acquaint them with the reasons for his change of plans, and to give them directions concerning the collection he was in process of taking for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

7. The final visit, when he stays three months and writes Romans. (Acts 20: 3.)

So that, broadly stated, the real reason for all this correspondence with Corinth is seen to lie largely in the fact that Paul and this people were at outs, or, in plain terms, had a quarrel on. In no single instance do we see a fulfillment on such a splendid scale of the old-time saying that the wrath of man shall praise God as right here. Out of the misinterpretations, misunderstandings, misconstructions, and misconduct of all these people has come a body of writing that, for its inspiring and Christlike contents, has no parallel in the whole range of the New Testament. Take away from us First and Second Corinthians, and there goes the psalm of love (1 Cor. 13), the joyful pæan of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15), Paul's exultant exposition of the glory of the preacher's calling (2 Cor. 2: 14-4), and his splendid setting of the variegated richness of the manifold expression of the Spirit's life in the Church (1 Cor. 12). So the wonder of revelation continually grows the more we study. Not only the casual and the commonplace, but also the vicious perversions and even criminal tendencies of men frequently become the fulcrum upon

which the leverage of inspiration works. We must turn now briefly to notice

THE FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

Place and Occasion of Writing

The place is told us very clearly in chapter 16: 8. It is also hinted at indirectly in chapter 15: 32. The salutation in verse 19 of chapter 16, together with his reference to Apollos in verse 12 of the same chapter, taken in connection with the parallels in Acts (chapters 18: 18, 24, and 19: 1), fix the place as *Ephesus*. The time is doubtless near the close of his three years' stay there (Acts 20: 31).

The occasion of the writing is due to several influences. In the first place, it is due to a letter the Corinthians themselves had written Paul, asking him to solve for them certain perplexing problems that had arisen by reason of their efforts to apply the principles of Christianity to their life in the great city of Corinth. This consideration is based upon the fact that from the seventh chapter on Paul uses as a formula of transition one which seems to indicate that he is taking up questions in order (*cf.* chapter 7: 1, "now concerning," and chapters 7: 25, 8: 1, 10: 1, 12: 1); also throughout the letter we have from time to time words or phrases which seem to be quoted in order to be corrected or refuted (*cf.* his frequent emphasis on the word "know"—*e. g.*, 6: 3, 9, 15; also chapter 6: 12, "All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient").

But there was another provocation for this letter. This is referred to in chapter 1: 11, where "those of Chloe" tell Paul of the schisms in the Church there. Then, too, the statements made by Stephanas and his two companions may have called attention to some of the points discussed in the letter. Possibly we owe the fifteenth chapter to the fact that these three told Paul of some who were casting suspicion upon a fundamental fact of the gospel. Then, finally, there was one thing they were guilty of for which no special channel of in-

formation was necessary. The notorious case referred to in chapter 5 was a matter of common report.

All these conditions confronted the apostle as he took up his task and turned to his amanuensis to dictate one of the most precious documents the Christian library contains. If this be the occasion,

The Contents of This Writing

are most easily grasped. By reason of the fact that Paul follows the *topical* method, this letter is one of the easiest of all his writings to read continuously. Again, by reason of its subject matter it fastens our attention; for it discusses not abstract theological questions, but practical, everyday problems which the men and women of that community have to conquer or succumb to. It is hence the tragedy of real life that holds us here. Then, too, the spirit in which this master teacher goes about to solve these delicate questions is indeed the most captivating element of all. For here we see him applying his great and Christlike maxim of being all things to all men that he might win some to the path of peace and power.

After a salutation of unusual graciousness, he utters his usual paragraph of thanksgiving and then plunges into the *rebuke called for by the presence of factions in their midst*. This is characteristic of Paul. He knows that what the Corinthian Church really needs is not so much information about this or that question of conduct, but their *real* need is a true grasp on the fundamental principle of the gospel message, which means *unity through faith in and love for Christ*. He therefore castigates them severely for splitting up the body of Christ and then goes on to show them that real Christian discipleship does not show itself in ranging under this or that man as a leader, but rather as viewing all Christian workers as instruments and Christ himself as living and superintending Lord. For the gospel is not a philosophy to be exploited even by the eloquence of an Apollos, nor yet a system of legalism to be perpetuated under the mighty name of Christ's pil-

lar apostle Peter, nor yet a mere tacking on of a Pauline placard. It is life in and through Christ, and therefore it is too large a thing, to say no more, to be covered by the canopy of one man's experience or explication. This gives Paul a background on which he throws in bold relief his conception of the Christian minister's calling; though, so far as the Corinthians themselves are concerned, he abates not a whit in his insistence on the fact that he, and he alone, is their spiritual father—they may have ten thousand tutors, but he begat them, and as proof of his spiritual paternity he claims the right, if necessary, to come to them "with the rod."

The second topic is that of the *notorious case of immorality*. Paul is horrified that nothing so far has been done to the offender. He therefore calls upon them for immediate action and rebukes them for their flimsy excuse in not heeding his former instructions. He calls for summary punishment upon the wicked man.

A third unpleasant duty devolves upon Paul before he gets to their letter. He feels himself forced to arraign them severely for a *tendency to "lawing,"* and that, too, before heathen judges. This he deprecates most emphatically and calls a short "Halt!" to this pernicious practice.

Coupled with this capacity for litigiousness was a companion vice—that of *licentiousness*. This, too, is severely condemned, and the spiritual principle it so grossly violates is set in strong light when Paul declares as against all heathen practice, especially the Greek attitude of his day: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?"

He is now ready to take up *seriatim* the questions their letter contained, and these problems are *social problems*. The problem of marriage in all its various phases, all the way from absolute celibacy to absolute nondivorce, including those who act voluntarily and those whose actions are dominated by others; the problem of eating things offered to idols, a burning social problem for the new converts in Corinth; the ques-

tion of how far individual right is to be surrendered for the public good; the question of their behavior at the Lord's Supper; the matter of spiritual gifts and the absolute supremacy of love; the conduct of the public worship—all these and other points call forth from Paul's head and heart some of the sanest, the most scientific, and at the same time most sympathetic sentences that have ever fallen upon parchment. This brings us through the fourteenth chapter.

The fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians constitutes an epoch in the history of human thought, establishes a new and hitherto unrivaled record in Christian eloquence, and marks with its exultant Ebenezer the most victorious march that humanity has yet made in its progress toward the gates of life.

The final chapter concludes with directions for the collection, plans as to his own travels, directions as to Timothy's reception, an explanation of Apollos's absence, and a few concluding exhortations and salutations; then Paul takes the pen from the hand of his amanuensis, signs his name, and, summing up all the troubles at Corinth under one general cause and summing up the great cure for all the problems in one great word, he closes with, "If any man love not the Lord, let him be anathema."

And so the curtain is rung down upon the scene; and doubtless Paul as he closed this letter indulged the hope that this Church, which in the early chapters was so rent into parties and all through the epistle is so perplexed and tortured by vexing questions of creed and conduct, would be fused into unity through the compelling grace of Christ and forge its way to victory over all currents of opposition, both within and without, under the dynamic of the love that gilded the barren brow of Golgotha with the glory of the sacrifice that redeems.

THE SO-CALLED SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

A Visit to Corinth and a Rebuff

If such was Paul's dream, he had a rude awakening. So soon was his dream shattered that we find him has-

tening across to Corinth in person, only to be beaten away in defeat. Some man—possibly of the so-styled Christ party—had successfully withstood his authority, and the apostle's heart was heavy. His righteous indignation was aroused, his soul was lashed into a fury, and he penned in hot haste a terrific letter that doubtless was full of stinging rebuke to his wayward children. We can get a partial glimpse of this in chapters 10: 1 and 13: 10 of the so-called second epistle. This is the "painful" letter, or the great invective, as some choose to call it. Into this Paul heaped all the scorn and sarcasm and biting satire of which he was capable; but passionate pleading is here too, and evident humiliation and contrition of spirit. His feelings at times transgress all the bounds of both logic and language, and we come closer to a bleeding human heart in these paragraphs than anywhere else in literature. He hoped this method would win them back to his embrace; he feared that his hopes might again go astray. He sent it by Titus and waited anxiously and feverishly for the result.

The result came while he was in Macedonia. He was in such a state of excitement that he could not engage in missionary work. He had been forced into illness well-nigh unto death by reason of his tragic suspense. The news of their change of front to him, their penitence, and their loyalty is so gratifying that his heart leaps forth in sentences which at times are exceedingly hard to follow; but the inescapable impression is that all the past uncertainty and unfriendliness is gone, and gone forever (2 Cor. 1: 1-14).

He hastens now to apologize for any seeming change of plans. He launches forth into a vindication of this change that shows it was the outgrowth of concern for them, not fear on his part (2 Cor. 1: 15-2). He then (chapters 3-6: 10) elaborates his conception of the preacher's calling, and in these sections we have the most splendid description of ministerial inspiration and obligation that literature knows. Then come, in chap-

ter 7, further explanations and confessions of his love for them. Chapters 8 and 9 go minutely into the details of the coming collection, with arguments ranging all the way from the example of the Macedonians to the example of the Master, culminating in the characteristic Pauline fashion of taking the collection at the foot of the cross (chapter 9: 15).

The theory we hold regards the last three verses of chapter 13 as the final verses of Paul's fourth and, so far as we know, last communication with Corinth. How fitting that this correspondence—so grievous, so sharp, so bitter at times—should conclude with the words of the apostolic benediction, the words which the consciousness of Christendom has decided are the fittest to use when Christian brethren separate for a season!

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

Soon after writing our Second Corinthians Paul made his way through Macedonia and came to Lower Greece, visiting Corinth for the third time and spending three months with his now reconciled flock. It was during this time that he wrote the letter to the Roman Church, the biggest piece of literary work he ever did. This masterpiece of literature is too large to handle thoroughly in our space; but we can at least get the setting, and this will go far toward giving us some insight into its meaning.

Introduction

To begin with, Paul had never been to Rome, though the magnetism of the world's metropolis had been drawing him ever since the days of his Ephesian pastorate (see Acts 19: 21). He had tried oftentimes to get to them, as he himself declares (Rom. 1: 13), but for one cause or another had been hindered. Though he had not founded the Church there, he felt sure that if he could come in contact with them a mutual benefit would ensue. So he is bending all efforts to pass by them on his way to Spain (see chapter 15: 22-24). But he is now

going the other way, being bound for Jerusalem to carry the alms—the “collection” of the Corinthian epistles—to the Christians at Jerusalem. He does not know what the outcome of this visit will be. He fears that evil may befall him, especially as he had been the recipient of a sort of prophecy to this effect. So he calls upon them for their prayers, and can only hope that the sequel to his journey will be a happy one.

Here, then, in this fifteenth chapter is *the place to get the mental and spiritual condition of the apostle*. This gives us the psychological background for the writing. He doubtless felt that this might be his last opportunity to set before the minds of men his conception of Christ and the gospel. He would embrace it for all it was worth. He would direct the message to Rome, and so secure for it a strategic center. He would plan more comprehensively and execute more thoroughly than ever before. Whether this is absolutely true or not, it remains a solid fact that on all hands this letter is regarded as one of the mountain peaks of human thought. It has been styled “the cathedral of Christian doctrine,” “the profoundest book in existence,” “the greatest philosophy of history ever penned,” “the compendium of Christian theology.” Without vouching for the absolute truth of any of these characterizations, we can at least conclude that a writing which calls forth such plaudits as these is no ephemeral production and well merits our earnest study. We note at the outset that

This Epistle Is Not Called Forth by Any Condition Presumably in the Roman Community

In other words, Paul is not provoked into writing. This, then, is a positive message, and we are to look for more continuous and logical treatment of the subjects in hand, simply because the writer is not so much under the necessity of stopping to make the local application. Hence in this letter we lose, it may be, the interest of the frequent “local hits” with which the Corinthian and Galatian correspondence abounds, but at

the same time our author is able to gain a momentum and unity that nowhere else appear.

The contents of the epistle may be broadly looked at under four divisions, the three breaks being at the first verse of chapters 9 and 12 and the fourteenth verse of chapter 15.

The first division, extending through the first eight chapters, is the positive section, wherein

Paul Elaborates His Conception of Christianity as a Divine Provision for the World's Redemption.

In the first three chapters he shows the necessity for some divine provision growing out of the palpably lost condition of both Gentile and Jewish elements, since neither has attained redemption, but all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The whole world lies guilty before God. Both streams of humanity—those within the pale of Revelation and those without—have Law; but in both cases Law brings not life, but the full experience of sin, and this ultimates in death.

With chapter 3, verse 21, begins Paul's description and interpretation of God's method of making men righteous under the revelation of his love and power in Christ. He shows that this is no new method, but that from the beginning of his personal relation to men God's life to them has been mediated through the only channel by which persons can have any stable union and communion—namely, trust. This is illustrated from the case of Abraham, and he is set forth as the type of true Christian experience by reason of the fact that when God made a promise to him he believed it. Upon no other basis than a basis of confident trust can friendship be fostered, hence the logic of Paul's position. The man that will not trust God in view of what Christ has revealed is absolutely beyond the pale of even God's power to justify. But when a moral personality reacts favorably upon this revelation of God's character and attitude, the man becomes united with Christ and so becomes a partaker of the divine nature and a par-

ticipant in the divine righteousness. It is no fiction, legal or theological, that Paul is talking of, for the problem is no imaginary thing. God's task is to solve the problem of how to remain righteous and at the same time make righteous an unrighteous man. In other words, God's task is a moral task, not a mechanical or a mythical one. He must not infringe upon man's freedom, nor yet insult his moral sense, and yet he must transform his nature. So he must reveal himself in such a light as to call forth our trust and love, for unless we are saved morally we are not saved at all. This God does in Christ, and the fifth chapter is devoted to a delineation of the joyful fruits of this experience in its individual relation (verses 1-11) and in its racial application (verses 12-21).

Chapter 6 constitutes Paul's protest against antinomianism, which has ever been the dark shadow that has followed on the footsteps of the gospel of grace. He shows that while the gospel spells freedom from law and sin, it spells also the bondage of a love far more binding than all else besides.

Chapters 7 and 8 constitute the *ne plus ultra* of scientific analysis of spiritual phenomena. Here the apostle brings out clearly the failure as well as the function of law, shows its real place in the divine economy, elucidates for us the new law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, shows us the transcendent superiority of the Spirit-filled life, and closes by revealing to our gaze the glorious spectacle of a Spirit-thrilled universe. Christ has vindicated all cosmic travail in what he does for and through men. Even dumb nature proclaims that she is justified for all the reign of "tooth and claw," and encompassing all—God and men and the universe itself—there spans the triumphant arch of Christian confidence gleaming in the golden radiance of the victor's shout: "All things work together for good to them that love." The positive section of the epistle closes here; God's task has been completed. He has taken the unrighteous Gentile, sunk in the shameless pits of

Corinthian abomination, and the falsely righteous Jew, pluming himself on his man-made moral conventions, and out of both he has developed really righteous men, and through the processes of his gracious Spirit's training has made them candidates for celestial company.

This, then, is the scope of Paul's teaching positively stated; this is the power of the gospel as he understands it—namely, to take a man out of the pit of corruption in the first chapter and place him in the eighth amid the companionship of the holy, where nothing in heaven or earth or hell can separate him from the love of God that has been demonstrated to the world in Christ,

The *second grand* division of Romans, extending through the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters, is rather difficult to understand, unless we regard it as Paul's effort to meet

A Historical Situation

that loomed large in his day. This situation was the undeniable fact that the Jewish nation as a nation had not entered into the enjoyment of the Messianic kingdom. The Jew argued: "In view of this obvious fact—namely, the exclusion of Israel of old from the current of the divine grace—either God has been unfaithful to his promises made to our fathers, or else the Messianic message you are delivering is false." As a sequel to his logic the unbelieving Jew would take the former horn of the dilemma and say: "I will not entertain the idea that God is unfaithful; therefore I repudiate *in toto* your claims for your gospel."

It is to meet this capital criticism of Christianity as the final form which the revelation of God assumes that Paul enterprises this discussion. It is not necessary to go through the matter in detail; the three stages of his argument are fairly well indicated by the chapter divisions. In chapter 9 Paul disposes of the Jewish conception that God has made any hard-and-fast promise

or bound himself in any way that would militate against the exercise of his sovereignty. In fact, this has been, says Paul, the only method of the divine procedure that we can discover. In the case of Abraham against the world, in the case of Isaac against Ishmael, in the case of Jacob against Esau, the only reason we can trace is God's sovereign choice. And so of the nation itself in the days of Moses and Pharaoh; for even here it is the divine sovereignty, not human merit, that rules, for even to Moses he administers a rebuke to eradicate all seeds of pride: "I will exercise mercy on whomsoever I please to exercise mercy."

Thus Paul disposes of this phase of the matter. The tenth chapter carries us into another realm—the realm of human responsibility. Here it is that Paul finds the real answer as to the cause of the exclusion of the whilom chosen race. By the exercise of their own freedom of choice and the exhibition of the resisting power of their wills they have steeled themselves against the approach of divine grace, and so upon them as a nation has descended a moral blindness, and wrath has fallen upon them in signal fury. The eleventh chapter is the great consolation that Paul gets as he looks to the future and discovers, as he thinks, the divine purpose ruling and overruling in all this matter of racial election. The past of the Jewish people has been glorious; their present is one of intense gloom and sadness; but their future is radiant with promise. Their defection is only partial; it will last only for a season; and in the great consummation of God's purpose among the nations all their devious history will have its ultimate justification. And on the wings of this mighty faith Paul soars to the great height of his wonderful climax at the conclusion of chapter 11.

The Hortatory Section

of this epistle is exceedingly rich in spiritual suggestiveness, and extends from the beginning of chapter 12 through the thirteenth verse of chapter 15.

The Personal Section

The concluding paragraphs of this chapter are devoted to his plans, his hopes, and his fears. Chapter 16 contains by far the longest list of personal names and salutations we have from Paul, and is most interesting from the number of specific biographical details it enshrines. The concluding paragraph in the form of a long doxology sums up the main points of the writing, just as the opening verses constitute the theme of the discussion stated in advance. In this case Tertius was Paul's penman, and he joins with others in saluting the "saints that are of Cæsar's household."

Thought Questions

1. Describe the Corinth of Paul's day and give some account of Paul's first visit to the city.

2. Recite in order the six contacts of Paul with Corinth, whether in person or by letter, and give reason for believing these to be proved.

3. Give the place and date of writing of First Corinthians and give your reasons for believing these to be correct.

4. What called forth this letter, and why do you believe that it was thus provoked?

5. What rebukes do you find in the first six chapters? What questions are answered in the remaining chapters? What two great passages of literature do you find in this letter?

6. What was the occasion of the writing of Second Corinthians? What portion of the letter as we have it seems to have been taken from the so-called "painful" letter? What are the two great subjects of this letter?

7. In what way do the place and time of the writing of the letter to the Romans fit into the account of Paul's ministry at Corinth?

8. What was Paul's personal relation to the Church at Rome?

9. In what circumstance does the letter to the Romans differ from the other epistles we have been considering?

10. What is the main line of teaching of each of the four major divisions of the letter to the Romans?

V. PAUL'S PRISON CORRESPONDENCE

Passages for Daily Readings

Sunday.—From Corinth to Rome. Acts 19: 21, 22; 20: 1-6, 17-36; 21: 15, 27-33; 23: 11; 27: 1, 2; 28: 16-30.

Monday.—The Preëminence of Christ. Colossians 1: 9-23.

Tuesday.—Christ the Fullness. Colossians 2: 8-23.

Wednesday.—God's Inheritance in the Saints. Ephesians 1: 15-2: 10.

Thursday.—The Christian's Walk. Ephesians 5: 1-21.

Friday.—The Great Motive for the Work of Christ and the Consequence for Christians. Philippians 2: 1-18.

Saturday.—The Requirements of Discipleship. Philippians 3: 1-21.

Introduction

WE now come to the third period of the literary career of the great apostle to the Gentiles. The second period closed with Romans; and though Paul was to some extent fearful that this might be his last writing, in the providence of God his life was spared. And though his external range of activity was thenceforth much limited, still the output of his energies at this time tells more on the future history of the Christian movement than possibly all his other labors put together.

The visit to Jerusalem referred to in the Roman epistle was made, but Paul was arrested there and carried thence to Cæsarea, where he was detained two years. Thence on his appeal to Cæsar he was deported to Rome, where the narrative in Acts leaves him with the significant sentence: "Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, no man forbidding him." Here we see the double phase of the apostle's work while under watch in the capital city. His untiring spirit, though hedged about by frowning city walls,

busied itself in seeking converts among the soldiers, in the slums, and to some extent pierced into the circle of the palace itself. But his great contribution to Christianity at this time is, of course, the splendid letters that come from his pen in answer to the inquiries and perplexities of his Churches—some of them far removed in space, but all of them carried still on the heart of their loving founder and pastor. Of these letters, we have (probably in the order of their composition) Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Philippians. These four date from the first Roman imprisonment; and one has but to glance at any one of them to see the incalculable debt which future ages were to owe to the hand that penned them, and at the same time to appreciate the wonderful providence that through the gloom of a Roman prison could send forth such a steady stream of light and life for the inspiration of "ages to come." We shall study all these letters in this chapter save Philemon, which, being strictly private, may be thrown with those to Timothy and Titus.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Let us then consider first the Epistle to the Colossians. Its occasion, its teaching, and its general comprehensiveness mark it as one of Paul's most significant utterances.

The Occasion of Colossians

Colosse was a city of Asia Minor, on the banks of the Lycus River. Paul himself, it seems, had never been there (2:1), but in all probability it had been evangelized by Epaphras and other helpers of his during his long pastorate at Ephesus. At any rate, he was intensely interested in the Church at that place and thoroughly cognizant of the dangers confronting it. It was doubtless through the report of Epaphras (4:12) that Paul got news of the special dangers that were then imminent. The territory of Asia Minor was the common meeting ground of the East and West of that

day, and hence all sorts of opinions were rife, especially in the sphere of religious thinking. As early as Acts 20, in his address to the Ephesian elders, Paul had put himself on record as seeing the seeds of coming heresy springing up in the bosom of the Church itself. This fear of many years' standing has now become a reality. Error has swooped down upon his brethren and is threatening to undermine their faith in Christ as their all-sufficient Saviour. This error, as we see from the epistle itself, has two phases. In the first place, there is a Judaic element, as is seen positively from the reference to "new moons" and "Sabbaths" (2: 16), and negatively from Paul's emphasis on the necessity for spiritual circumcision as contradistinguished from that of the mere formal sort (2: 11). The second element in the error combated is more vague, but seems to be a sort of incipient Gnostic teaching in which theosophic speculation, shadowy mysticism, and a tendency to interpose certain spiritual agencies between God and man unite to the detriment of the clear teaching of the gospel. This latter phase seems to dominate, for it is given greater attention in the letter.

Two characteristics of it are clear. To begin with, it was a species of intellectual exclusiveness, and a kind of spiritual aristocracy was implied in it which was wholly foreign to the spiritual democracy inculcated and illustrated by Christ. Hence all through Colossians we find Paul contending most strenuously for the universality of the Christian message. "Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man, . . . that we may present every man perfect in Christ" (1: 28). In addition to being an intellectual aristocracy, this Gnostic element set for itself the problem of explaining how the world as we have it could come from God. The twofold question was, "How may we account for creation?" and, "How explain the existence of evil?" The second question was answered by saying that matter is essentially evil, and hence the larger problem is the first. If matter is essentially

evil, how could an infinitely holy God create a material universe? To bridge the chasm between infinite holiness and finite evil, the fancy of these teachers conceived a series of successive emanations, each less divine than its predecessor, until finally Deity had become undivine enough to come in contact with physical imperfection. This chasm the thinkers of these schools called "the fullness" or "void" or "pleroma." With one sweep Paul closes the gap between God and the universe by saying: "It pleased God that in him [that is, in Christ] should all the fullness dwell."

But there was a practical as well as a speculative side to this false teaching. The question of the moral life had to be met, and for the most part asceticism, rigid and constant, was the instant prescription. If matter is evil, then flagellation of the body ought to bring relief. And so the hard logic of the system, if at the time of Paul it could be called a system, entailed a merciless adherence to rigid asceticism which had, indeed, "a show of wisdom in will worship and humility and severity to the body, but was not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh." And so, for the Colossians as for all, asceticism in religion led to despair. Both speculatively and practically, therefore, the whole thing was a failure, and Paul sets about to correct its fundamental error. This he does by insisting that Christianity holds

Christ as the Fullness of God

There are three great phases of this statement that require attention. The first is the supremacy of Christ *in the material universe*. Here (1: 16) Paul joins hands with John's Gospel and the Epistle to the Hebrews and sets forth Christ as the cause of creation itself. "In him were all things created." No need, then, says Paul, for the Christian to get tangled up in the endless chain of causes implied in the contention of the errorists, for the one simple and sublime explanation of the cosmos is Christ. However difficult this

may be for our modern conceptions, it is significant that whenever the apostolic age speaks on this point the testimony is unanimous. John is no less strong in his statement: "All things were made through him." The unknown writer to the Hebrews voices the same fundamental conviction when he asserts: "By whom also he made the worlds." So when Paul avers of Christ that "all things have been created through him and unto him, . . . and in him all things consist," let us not think that we are dealing with an individual idiosyncrasy, but rather are listening to the unimpeachable verdict of the highest and deepest Christian speculation. The material universe must have a ground or basal explanation. Its fundamental reason is that through it God may reveal himself. But no material universe, however huge in scale, can adequately represent God. Only God can reveal God, and this revelation comes in the person of Christ. *This is the goal of all creation*—namely, that God may express himself in the highest form of finite existence. This highest form is man, the crown of all material creation. Therefore Christ is the cause of the cosmos, for it is only through creation and incarnation that God can be adequately known as God.

But the apostle goes a stage farther in his argument. Christ is not only supreme in the material universe, he is also supreme in *God's moral creation*. He is the Head of the body, the Church; he is the Medium through whom reconciliation is wrought throughout all the ranges of moral intelligences; he is God's eternal vindication of things as they are in process of being brought to terms of peace with himself. Christ is thus the final answer to all the questionings of the human heart. Long before Browning phrased it, Paul thought out the deep meaning of that statement of faith which has never been revised nor ever needed restatement:

"The acknowledgment of God in Christ, accepted by thy
reason,
Solves for thee all questions in the world and out of it."

But, further, Christ, if he be supreme in the material and moral spheres, is certainly *sufficient for all the legitimate demands of the Christian life*. Therefore the warning: "Take heed that no man spoil you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And in him ye are made full." (2: 8-10.) Here is the answer Paul would give to all those subtle suggestions which indicate that Christian faith has to be supplemented by asceticism, rigid adherence to legalistic formulas, outward ceremonials, or what not. "You were dead, and he raised you. He forgave you; he blotted out the bond of ordinances which was against you. He nailed it to his cross. He despoiled all this hierarchy of principalities and powers of which these false teachers prate so eloquently. He made a public show of their impotence when he triumphed over them by his cross." "What need for anything else? Here are the great spiritual verities, the realities of the Christian life. Let no man crib, cabin, and confine you in the narrow limitations of a rigid observance of mere diet and days. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink. Let no man rob you of the great prize of spiritual deliverance won for you by Christ. Do not be cheated out of your birthright as believers in a risen, exalted Lord for the poor mess of pottage that a petty mundane philosophy may conjure up. Risen with Christ, your direction is onward and upward, not backward and downward. Your affections and your hopes are with him; and the source of your life is not in the specious systems that mere human thinking can devise, but your life has its rooting in God, for it is hid with Christ, and he is all-supreme and all-sufficient." (2: 8-3: 4, paraphrase.)

The Universality of the Christian Message

From the fifth verse of the third chapter to the seventh verse of the fourth Paul is occupied in giving at-

tention to the all-embracing scope of the Christian message. If Christ is all-supreme in the material and moral universe and all-sufficient for the demands of the ever-enlarging and advancing Christian experience, then his claim is all-inclusive and the Christian obligation is universal in its scope. In the first place, this obligation is absolute with regard to all forms of sin and evil. It calls for a crucifixion of the members that are upon the earth (3: 5) and a putting off of the old man with his deeds. In the second place, it demands the putting on of the new man, beginning with a heart like unto that of Christ, issuing in an attitude to men like that Christ himself maintained, resulting in an inward peace such as Christ ever possessed, and manifesting itself at all times as guardian of that word of Christ which constantly shows its fruitage in wise admonitions to men and grateful praise to God (3: 12-16).

Again, and finally, *the Christian religion is for all men and all the relations of life*. In Christ there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman, but Christ is all and in all. It encompasses all the duties of life. "Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." And all relations, too, are involved. Wives, husbands, children, servants, masters—all are to live under the direct gaze of him who is in heaven. True religion does not spell aristocracy, whether that of Pharisaic pride or scribal smartness, but it demands a divine democracy whose guiding principle is the Spirit of Jesus and whose final objective is mutual upbuilding. Hence Paul's final paragraph (4: 2-6) claims all spiritual exercise as Christ's rightful possession. The prayer life, the life of external action, and the life of social intercourse—all these are to be consecrated to him. For he that is all-supreme in nature and in grace, he that is all-sufficient for the initiation and the development of Christian experience—this one must needs be also all-sovereign over all the ranks

of men and over all the ranges of human activity; for it is ever true that "Christ is Lord of all or else not Lord at all."

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

Introduction

This writing must be reckoned as dating from Paul's first Roman imprisonment, and is best understood when considered as a complement to the letter sent to the city of Colosse. That letter, as we have seen, is the apostle's greatest effort to set forth in its true light his conception of Christ's person and work. It is highly significant that just about this time his great soul should have given expression to the Epistle to the Ephesians—his greatest effort to set forth the true nature and scope of the Church. Here he was in the capital city of the greatest empire history had known up to that time, an empire truly magnificent in its organization and imperial in its demands upon the imagination of any truly thoughtful soul. The great ideas for which that empire stood were unity and perpetuity. The slogan of all in authority was: "Let the Eternal City give laws to the world." These two ideas, thus dimly achieved in the history of Rome, Paul saw gloriously realized in the conception of the Christian Church. Here, exclaims he, is the really eternal city made up of those who are chosen in Him "before the foundation of the world." Here is the real unity among the nations. Not that brought about by mere force of arms, but that wrought out by the mighty power of God himself, who through the cross of his Son has broken down the intervening wall of the partition separating the nations of earth and has made of all men one new humanity, a temple high and holy, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner Stone.

Strange irony here! The enemies that thrust this clear-eyed seer into a Roman dungeon were simply affording him a medium through which to view the future glory of the Christian Church. Out of the heart

of Rome, the synonym for war, came this greatest gift of peace the world has yet received—peace with God and harmony with men. Let us consider somewhat generally the destination and doctrine of the epistle and conclude with a brief statement of its contents.

The Destination of Ephesians

In all probability this epistle is not directed solely to the Church at Ephesus. Paul had spent his longest time as a preacher-pastor in this city, and it is hardly conceivable that had he been writing to this Church alone he would have refrained from all salutations. In all his other letters he lets us know who his friends are and for the most part why they are his friends. It is not credible that he would have here broken his custom save on the assumption that the letter was sent to others as well as to the saints in Diana's district. Again, the fact that some old manuscripts do not have in the opening verse the phrase "in Ephesus" seems to suggest that the destination was not stated or at least was left blank to be filled in later as occasion demanded. In Colossians 4: 16 Paul says to that Church: "And when this epistle has been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye also read the epistle from Laodicea." It is this last sentence that explains the situation. Paul had evidently sent a special letter to Colosse because through Epaphras he had learned of dangers then threatening them. Then, knowing that the whole Lycus Valley was subject more or less to the same stress and strain, he decided to send a communication to suit the conditions that confronted all the chain of Churches there. This writing would set forth the general characteristics of the Church of Christ; it would be a discussion of the fundamental things in the life of the Church; it would stress the principles of unity and perpetuity—that is, it would be a performance just like the one we have before us—it would be sent around in the circuit of those Churches Paul had enterprised

while he made Ephesus his strategic base of missionary effort. And as this great city had dominated as the center of the heathen worship of all that section, it was perfectly natural that this leadership should be characteristic of her Christian history and that the letter the Church should finally incorporate into the canon would be the copy (or the copy of the copy) left by the itinerant messenger at Ephesus.

Some Great Teachings

Among the fundamental utterances of this profound writing we must mention first that of the universal Fatherhood of God. Indeed, this epistle among Paul's writings is on this point what St. John is among the Gospel authors. We can have no universe, either in the moral or material sphere, save on this conception of the Father "from whom every family in heaven and earth is named."

Going along with this as a necessary correlate there is here stressed the essential unity of the race as realized in the Christian community. Human nature as such has been redeemed and exalted in Christ into the very "heavenlies" themselves.

The third general truth emphasized in this epistle is the divine function of the Christian family. If God finds his crowning glory in revealing his Fatherhood, and if humanity has been ideally realized in Christ, this naturally follows: the Christian family must be the very antechamber of heaven. Hence Paul in his later letters, especially in Ephesians, gives a much larger place to the family as the seed plot of the kingdom and the bulwark of the Church than he does in his earlier efforts. In these first letters all things are foreshortened, due to the heavy pressure of the belief in the speedy return of the Lord. Here, however, this impression has been for the most part corrected, and a long vista is thus opened up for the future history of the Church. There are "ages to come" which are to hear of his wonderful Gospel, and therefore Paul sees

the greater reason why he should dwell upon the permanence of Christian organization, the functions of the various forces working for the kingdom, and various strata of the social order diversified, indeed, in end but all-divine in origin. Hence it follows that there is little "local color" exhortation in this writing. Its great principles are as pertinent to-day in our modern centers of Church and commercial activity as they were in the great city of Ephesus. Here time is caught in the mighty grip of God's all-inclusive purpose and merged into eternity; here all mere places are lifted up into "the heavenlies"; here the discordant and hitherto antagonistic becomes harmonious and unified; here the transient becomes the abiding—all because of the wonderful grace of God revealed in the redemptive work of Christ.

The Main Contents

There seem to be two well-defined sections in the six chapters that constitute our letter. Chapters 1-3 are clearly doctrinal, this section closing with a noble doxology which sets forth in clear light the *power* of God and his claim upon the *praise* of men. Beginning with chapter 4 and going through to the end, we have the hortatory section, which appears to have three general divisions. Chapters 4: 1-5: 21 are an appeal to the whole Church, in which they are exhorted to walk worthy of their vocation in Christ, to part company forever with their old Gentile ideals, to practice the peculiar Christian virtues of truthfulness, honest toil, purity in speech, gentleness, forbearance, and love. They are also exhorted to avoid certain characteristic Gentile vices, such as impurity, covetousness, foolish jesting, and intemperance. This section reaches its climax in a noble plea that their lives be full of thankful joy and praise (5: 18-21).

The second phase of this hortatory section is that directed to all classes constituting the Christian Church (5: 22-6: 9). Here Paul takes the Christian home as

the seed plot of the Church, where the fundamental virtues of the new society are to have their real rootage and first fruitage. The whole gamut of the normal household is run—wives, husbands, children, parents, servants, masters. None are overlooked in the scheme of gospel redemption; and it is in the home, where the duties of submission, love, obedience, and forbearance are inculcated and illustrated, that the kingdom of God is coming most speedily and most surely.

The third part of this hortatory section (6: 10-20) is doubtless the most familiar passage in the entire epistle. From the picture of the ideal home which Paul denied himself that he might all the better serve his Lord he turns to the cold and cheerless prison home he has to inhabit. From the gracious Master in heaven, in whose employ he delights to be, he turns to his Master on earth, and he sees himself chained to a Roman soldier. But, far from being depressed by the sight, he gains and gives great inspiration from what his eye beholds. In fact, Paul saw the gospel message wheresoever his gaze did light. So he begins to preach the gospel of victorious conquest as he sees the equipment of his Roman guard. Mere material accouterment, even that of imperial Rome, does not count for much in the struggle the souls of men have to undergo. Men who follow Christ are called to grander campaigns than Cæsar ever summoned his legions to. Not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and spiritual hosts of wickedness they are to go forth. Therefore their armor must be of God, and Paul's faith will not allow him to believe less than that God will perfectly equip his loyal soldiers. Cæsar's man by his side has all that is requisite for successful defense or victorious advance. Shall Christ's man be less provided for? Nay, a thousand times nay! says this valiant veteran of many a hard and bitter campaign. From head to foot he is incased in the panoply of God. Truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, the word of God—these all shall prove mighty through God to the tear-

ing down of all opposition and the uprearing of the structure of the kingdom that shall abide.

And so this great letter, the theme of which is unity and perpetuity, closes with the figure of the Christian soldier. Great are the victories yet to be won ere these two great principles be secured, but far greater is our hope to-day than ever. The progress of federation among the Churches is fast breaking down the middle wall of partition that has so long divided the members of Christ's household. The dawn of the day of denominational disarmament is dimly discernible even now; and the progress of missions abroad, revealing as it does day by day the intrenchment of the Spirit of the living Saviour in the tombs of dead and dying heathen faiths, presages with an emphasis hitherto unfelt the time when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord. The new man—neither Greek nor Jew, neither Anglo-Saxon nor Slav, neither Oriental nor Occidental, but human in all the Christ-illuminated interpretation of the Word—is beginning to take form on humanity's horizon and to inspire humanity's hopes, and nearer are we to-day than ever the fulfillment of the divine ambition which voiced itself before time began in the unquenchable passion of the infinite Father: "Let us make man in our image."

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Introduction

Our study of Paul's prison correspondence fittingly closes with his farewell letter to Europe, and it is very significant that it is directed to the first Church founded by him on that continent. By referring to the chapter in Acts (the immortal sixteenth) we will refresh our minds on the thrilling incidents connected with the gospel invasion of Europe, and many points in our present letter will have much light cast upon them. In addition to this comment, it would be well to read 1 Thessalonians 1: 6-10 and 2: 1, 2 for further light

upon the whole Grecian situation. With these general suggestions, let us consider the following points:

Date and Occasion

The occasion of this letter is very clearly stated in the concluding paragraph of the last chapter (4: 14-19). After stating with characteristic independence his all-sufficiency in Christ, Paul gracefully and gratefully acknowledges the gift that had come from them through the kind offices of Epaphroditus, and also leaves them and us to infer that this Church was the only one from which he ever consented to receive gifts of this sort. And it is doubtless the people at Philippi he has in mind when he says to the proud Pharisees at Corinth: "I robbed other Churches, . . . that I might minister unto you." (2 Cor. 11: 8.) As we recur to the circumstances of the founding of this first Church in Europe and witness the persecution and humiliating insolence heaped upon the apostle there, it is no wonder that the few faithful souls that did accept his message were bound to him by ties absolutely unbreakable.

If the last chapter gives us the occasion, the first gives us a strong clue to the date of this writing. In this chapter (1: 23) Paul states the dilemma he finds himself in. He is in a strait betwixt two: whether to depart and be with Christ or to abide and labor in their behalf. He finally dissolves the doubt by calmly assuring them: "I know that I shall abide with you all." This seems to point to the conclusion that he is referring to his near release from imprisonment. He is in such intimate association with the household of Cæsar (4: 22) that all rumors incident to his trial are at once made known to him.

There are some able interpreters who regard this epistle as *first* in the order of his captivity correspondence. But we rather read the facts in such a way as to infer from all the canons of criticism the order adopted by us—Colossians having as its occasion the rise of an incipient gnosticism and a consequent temptation to doc-

trinal aberration; Philemon having its occasion in Rome in the conversion of a runaway slave; Ephesians having its occasion in Paul's knowledge that the entire Lycus Valley was in danger of losing the keynote of Christianity; and, finally, toward the close of his imprisonment, this Philippian Church, situated as it was in a city that had the boon of Roman citizenship, and as a colony was continually looking toward the mother city of the empire, hearing of Paul's condition as a captive there and fearing that their father in the faith was in need of the necessities of life, out of hearts of gratitude transmit to him a generous offering indicative of their love and confidence.

General Character and Contents

We are not to suppose that this is Paul's first communication to the Church at Philippi, for this is not their first contribution to him (4: 16); and certainly Paul would be the last man in the world to omit the courtesy of an acknowledgment of their bounty. This letter is a spontaneous stream of spiritual suggestiveness—all the more spiritual because more and more the material is vanishing from the apostle's gaze, all the more suggestive because its power lies not so much in what is said as in what is implied, all the more spontaneous because of the purely personal relation it embodies. Here, indeed, also we have Paul's interpretation of Christianity in its *purely positive* aspects. Its purpose is not to denounce errors in doctrine nor to combat delinquencies in duty, but to recognize and emphasize the life *through* Christ and the life *in* Christ. This feature of our epistle should cause us at such a time as this great gratitude. How pleasing that the apostle's correspondence with his Churches should close in this fashion—in the calm and clear presentation of those great positive principles of Christianity the earnest proclamation of which has ever proved the only corrective for a lax discipline and a sufficient safeguard against every erroneous doctrine!

The Doctrinal Element

While the primary emphasis in this epistle is not on doctrine, what is said is by no means unimportant. Three great passages must at least be mentioned, though their full discussion would run into volumes. The first of these (2: 5-11) gives in graphic outline the dominating motive underlying the work of Christ. While, of course, the writer never intended this as a strictly scientific analysis of the relations subsisting between Christ and God, and while it would hardly be fair to erect upon this paragraph alone a theory of the nature of our Lord, still the fundamental postulates of Christianity are here in an emphatic form, and we cannot fall far short of his meaning if we insist that Paul meant nothing less than absolute divinity as the pre-mundane possession of Christ. It was his great height that gave point and power to his great descent. Without such a Saviour, Christianity would never have started Saul of Tarsus on his glorious career; and surely the need for such a Saviour has not been supplied so far from any other source.

The second great passage is found in chapter 3: 3-16. Here is the apostle's teaching with regard to the demands of discipleship. The disciple, says Paul, is not above his Lord. If he stooped to conquer, so must we. Our first duty is to deny self. This is the paramount precept; and as Christ himself has illustrated it in the first instance, so one looks in vain for a higher human example than Paul. In this passage, which utters his protest against Judaism, he shows how futile it is from the fact that he had enjoyed its prerogatives in the very highest degree. And yet the outcome was spiritual bankruptcy, and he never reached true riches till he turned his back on all for Christ. Then, and then only, it was that he came to have a real righteousness—not his own, but of Christ—bestowed; then, and then only, did he become rich in knowledge by reason of coming to know the power of Christ's resurrection; and then, and then only, did he become rich in a hope that

pierced the gloom of the grave and lent its alluring rays to light his pathway to his new-found goal, "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

A third general point of teaching we must glance at. This is the comprehensiveness of Christianity as set forth in chapter 4: 8, 9. This is a consequence of the other two. Christ is Lord *over all*, and as such is the Author of our salvation. He is Lord *of all*, and as such has the right to lay down the demands of discipleship. On the strength of these two is laid the foundation of the gospel's "whosoever." But Christ is to be Lord *in all* as well. There is a "whatsoever" answering to the "whosoever." His domain not only includes all men; it is just as sweeping in its inclusion of their *tasks*. The kingdom of our Christ includes all truth, all honor, all justice, all purity, all loveliness, all things of good report—every conceivable virtue, every conceivable object of approbation. So Paul, too, knows that

"There are no Gentile oaks, no pagan pines;
The grass beneath our feet is sacred grass."

And he, along with us all, rejoices that so bigoted a Pharisee has been transformed into so cosmopolitan a Christian.

The Spiritual Tone

No one can keep company with Paul in this letter without recognizing the spiritual tonic of its bracing atmosphere. There is a ringing note of joy pervading nearly every paragraph: "Rejoice, . . . and again I say, Rejoice" (4: 4). Again, the calm dignity and unruffled peace of mind of the writer cannot escape us. He is here the best illustration of the promise he records: "The peace of God shall stand guard like a sentinel over your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus" (4: 7). Two illustrations—one at the beginning, the other at the close—of the letter must suffice. The first (1: 12-23) may be happily termed "the fortune of misfortune." Those buffetings which have been Paul's lot for so many days had now their full explanation. All

things are under the guidance of a Father's love. Things which boded disaster to the gospel and probable extinction of its chief herald had turned out marvelously otherwise. The advent of Paul had given such an impetus to gospel preaching at Rome as it had never known before. His bonds had proved more eloquent than his tongue. Not only the citizens, but the soldiers, rude and crude as they were, had heard, and even into the walls of the palace itself the message of the Crucified had found its way, and saints were being developed among the slaves of Cæsar's household.

The other passage is even more suggestive. It presents not so much the progress of grace outwardly, but rather inwardly in the heart of the apostle himself. Possibly no words tell us so much of the power of Christ to solve the problem of a human heart as this paragraph does (4:11-13). Paul here makes three statements: "I have learned, . . . I know, . . . I can do." His life, then, has not been in vain; his spirit has been under the educative process, and the fruits of a true culture appear in that he has studied in the school of Christ, caught his spirit, and acquired his power. Paul is thus discovered to be a master, because he has met *the Master* and has owned his sway. His is a great life, because through his life he let the "Life of lives" live. And how fitting it is that this man, whom in his letters we have followed through Thessalonica, Galatia, Corinth, Rome, Ephesus, and Colosse and found to be a fearless opponent of evil and a peerless exponent of God, should conclude in this fashion! How significant is this last glimpse we get of him as he makes his appeal to Philippi, not many miles distant from Thessalonica, whither the first letter was sent! We have followed him in his literary circuit, and he brings us back to Christ as the Author of all his inspiration and the Source of all his power. Paul, though he has written all these mighty messages, is still sitting, a docile pupil, at the feet of Jesus. His ambition still is "that I may know him." And here at

the feet of the great Teacher, whose messages he has done most to formulate and illustrate, is where all our study of Paul should leave us.

Thought Questions

1. Outline the story of Paul's travels from the last visit to Corinth and the writing of the letter to the Romans (Acts 19: 21, 22) to his imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28: 30).

2. Had the restriction of his liberty anything to do with the character and extent of Paul's literary activities during the period of imprisonment?

3. What are the prison epistles? Why not include the letter to Philemon?

4. What fear expressed by Paul in Acts 20: 29, 30 had proved to be well grounded with reference to the Church at Colosse and other Churches of the same region; and what were the two outstanding characteristics of the erroneous teachings that were there beginning to prevail?

5. What consequent question of the moral life followed as a corollary of the doctrinal errors?

6. How did Paul meet the Colossian errors concerning (1) creation, (2) the object of creation, and (3) the moral explanation of creation?

7. If Christ is the efficient agent of creation, the revelation of God and the moral vindication and goal of all things, what does Paul infer to be the scope and the breadth of application of the gospel message?

8. What was the especial purpose of the letter to the Ephesians, and in what way is it a complement to the letter to the Colossians?

9. What are the three great outstanding truths in Ephesians? (Fatherhood of God; unity of the race realized in the Christian community; the divine function of the Christian family.)

10. From a reading of Philippians what do you gather as to date, personal relations of the writing, and the especial occasion for the writing?

11. Give the substance of the three great doctrinal passages in the letter to the Philippians. 2: 5-11, the motive underlying the work of Christ; 3: 3-16, the demands of discipleship; 4: 10, the inclusiveness of Christian life and duty.

VI. PAUL'S PASTORAL AND PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE

Passages for Daily Readings

Sunday.—Some Personal References. Acts 16:1-3; 17: 13, 14; 18: 5, 6; 2 Corinthians 2: 12-14, 7: 5, 6, 13-16; Galatians 2: 1-3; Colossians 4: 7-9.

Monday.—A Country Bishop's Responsibilities. Titus 1: 5-2: 8.

Tuesday.—An Old Apostle's Reminiscences. 1 Timothy 1: 12-29.

Wednesday.—Practical Exhortations. 1 Timothy 2: 8-15; 3: 1-13; 6: 11-19.

Thursday.—Wise Counsels to a Young Minister. 2 Timothy 2: 1-8, 14-16, 22-26; 4: 1-5.

Friday.—Some Faithful Sayings. 1 Timothy 1:15; 3: 1-16; 5: 78; 2 Timothy 2: 11-13.

Saturday.—The Most Beautiful Letter Ever Penned
Philemon.

Introduction

WE give the title "Pastoral" to the three letters that have come down to us under the name of Paul, directed to his missionary helpers, Timothy and Titus. In a sense, all the letters of Paul we have hitherto studied are pastoral; but the title is more appropriately given to these, seeing that they are addressed to men who have pastoral oversight of certain congregations. In them Paul tries to give specific directions which, if followed, will help his representatives in their labor for the souls of men and the upbuilding of the kingdom. There are no other writings in the New Testament which constitute such a rich treasury of practical instruction as do these brief letters. Unfortunately, for over a century they have been in the maelstrom of criticism, and to a great extent the patience of both commentator and reader has been exhausted on matter of introduction, and the rich spiritual repasts have for the most part in the study of the

nineteenth century been sacrificed for the crusts of criticism and the dry bones of ecclesiastical archæology. Such must not be our method of approach in this study. We approach them not from the standpoint of criticism, nor from the standpoint of Church organization, but rather from the standpoint of the personal relation the author sustains to the addressees.

Let us begin with Titus. When Paul met Titus, we do not know. In fact, it is one of the standing mysteries of New Testament biography—second only to the fact that John the apostle is not mentioned in the fourth Gospel—that Titus does not appear in the whole range of the Acts of the Apostles. This has led some to argue that he is to be identified with Luke or Silas; but we cannot accept these efforts as satisfactory. Suffice it to say that he looms large in Paul's epistles, notably Galatians and 2 Corinthians. He was a pure Gentile and figured conspicuously at the Jerusalem conference as a sample of what Christianity could do with heathen material. Later on we find that he was of great service, both personally and professionally, to Paul, for it was his arrival and ministration that rescued the great apostle from some great spiritual and possibly physical depression and brought him back to life and hope. (2 Cor. 2: 12-14 and 1: 8, 9.) Subsequently to this he was of great service to his father in the faith in the part he played in helping on the matter of the collection and other administrative details at Corinth. He ever appears as a strong, sane, and in every way noble Christian character—just such a man as Paul would be proud to leave in a position of difficulty and responsibility.

THE EPISTLES TO TITUS

It is just such an appointment he has at the hands of Paul. He is read out for the Church in Crete, the central island of the Mediterranean. He has the whole island for his parish, and his work is "to set in order the things that are wanting, and appoint elders in

every city." If any preacher ever had a "big appointment," it certainly was Brother Titus. The territory to be covered was immense, the obstacles to be encountered were formidable, and the people to whom he was sent—well, the least said about them, the better. Their outstanding national trait—even on their own confession—was a triple alliance of falsehood, bestiality, and idleness. They were liars, lustful, and lazy. What sort of Christian leadership ought to be set over such a herd of swine? Here, if anywhere, men must be found who are not conformed to this environment, but who, having been transformed by the Spirit of Christ, can now demonstrate the transforming power of nonconformity. These swine must be changed to sheep; and before the shepherd can hug them to his bosom he must scrub them and drub them to wash and wean them of their filth and mire. No "like people, like priest" for Paul here in Crete! Rather he would have Titus himself and the overseers he appoints and the deacons and the members of the Church—men, women, children, and slaves—all of them face this great fact, that the real gospel message is a transformed human life that sheds the aroma and beauty of a heavenly sweetness and glory in never so untoward an atmosphere. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2: 11-14.) This is Paul's epitome of the evangel for Crete; and Crete was the world in epitome. Here is a great revelation, a great education, a great inspiration, a great expectation, and a great salvation. The third chapter of this bugle call to action shows the attitude Christians are to assume to the government and social order under which they live. Here the great

law is to destroy evil by the conquering power of love and holiness of life. Not agitation, nor even legislation, is any permanent cure for the ills that afflict so sorely the social order; but consecration to high and holy living and immolation of self on the altar of human service—this is the way the kindly disposition of the first great philanthropist has been manifested to men. (Titus 3: 4, 5.) Paul closes this strong and sympathetic appeal to his sturdy colaborer by referring to his plans for spending the winter at Nicopolis. This means, of course, that he is free from the restraint of prison restrictions; and in the hope of meeting his legal adviser, Zenas, and his preacher friend, Apollos, he closes with the conviction that the Christians of Crete will be the better for his writing, and that when Titus comes to conference at Nicopolis he will be able to report a year of unprecedented achievement.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

Our environment is altogether different in the epistles to Timothy. We have left Crete, the island, and are now in Ephesus, the great metropolis. The crudeness of the country has given place to the culture of the city. The strong Titus withdraws, and the timid Timothy appears. All is changed save one—yea, two things: the fact and force of sin and the presence and power of God in his gospel to save. Paul's relation to Timothy constitutes one of the standing charms of the New Testament. Their first meeting was significant. It was during the course of Paul's first missionary journey away out in the wilds of South Galacia, in the neighborhood of Derbe and Lystra, that this love first leaped into life. It was born at the gates of death. For who can say that it was not Paul's heroic suffering of stoning for the cause of truth that first fired the faith of the youthful half Jew? And, inspired by this mighty exhibition of manhood, he forsook the twilight of Judaism for the full splendor of the Christian day. Another reason, too: Timothy is the sad spectacle of a

youth reared without the sanction and example of a religious father. He had a noble mother and a devoted grandmother. We thank God, as Paul did, for their training of him in godly things. But without any derogation of their zeal and industry, it must be said that Timothy carried to the day of his death, doubtless, the marks of an unfinished training. The mother can do a great deal, but neither she nor her mother can do all that is necessary in the training of the life of a boy. As long as we know him, Timothy shows a lack of virility and an overplus of timidity. O, if his father had only been a Jew or even a devout proselyte! But he was not. He was a heathen. Here, then, was a son that needed a father, and here in Paul was a father-heart that needed a son. What wonder that this romance of the soul of these two, beginning out in the wilds of heathenism, is cemented all the stronger as the years of labor and suffering and conquest go by, and that it is finally consecrated and, so far as earth is concerned, consummated in the joyous meeting that we pray God did take place?

When in the last moments of his imprisonment, weighed down by a sense of weariness and loneliness and desertion, Paul forgets that he is a great preacher, a great organizer, a great theologian, a great philosopher—all these crowd out of his memory. He has no room for any feeling save the exquisite pang of paternity; he knows only that he has the heart of a great father, and in a sentence the pathos of which brings tears to our eyes to-day he cries out: "Use every effort to come to me at once." Let no curious eye desecrate that scene when, in the mutual embrace of father and son in the gospel, that Roman dungeon became the gateway to glory and its gloom was made radiant in the glow of a divinely perfected human affection.

But we turn from this their last meeting on earth to their earlier relations. From their second missionary journey Timothy is closely identified with Paul in all the perils and joys and sorrows of his missionary

propaganda. At Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, again in Macedonia and Achaia—possibly he was with him during his Cæsarean captivity; certainly he was with him in his first Roman imprisonment. These are just hints to show us how closely linked together were these two lives. It is no wonder, then, that when Paul needed a representative at Ephesus, the city where he had spent his longest pastorate and done his greatest work, he appeals to Timothy first with his "Who will go for me?" The reference that Paul makes to this appointment in 1 Timothy 1: 3 seems to indicate that it took some persuasion on his part. We may readily surmise the reason for this. Timothy's naturally timid disposition, coupled with the hugeness of the task precipitated by such a center as Ephesus, combined with a commendable humility on his part as to the outcome of *his* stepping into *Paul's* shoes, is sufficient explanation. It was not any lack of love, but rather lack of confidence in his own resources, that made him falter. This, to my mind, is the key of a great deal that has confounded the critics in this epistle. They cannot see why it is that Paul gives so much superfluous information (as they call it) to such men as Timothy and Titus, who ought to know all about his personal experiences. They say: "Why does Paul treat Timothy and Titus, who for years have been true and tried friends, like small boys? Why does he tell them so many things they ought to know and really know already? Why burden the epistles to them with details of the apostle's conversion—and even preconversion—experience?" At first glance this objection seems formidable; and yet the more clearly we construct the conditions, the less pertinence it seems to have.

To begin with, these men are practically missionary helpers facing hard problems of discipline and Church organization in difficult fields. This one fact, once recognized in all its implications, will do more than a score of commentaries to clear up the situation. What

Timothy and Titus need is not so much *instruction* as *inspiration*; and if we read the references, say to Paul's conversion, in this light, we shall see that they are not pieces of superfluous impertinence, but levers of supreme value to lift these his representatives out of the pit of doubt and distrust and send them to their tasks with the momentum of a divine dynamic. Hence it is, we think, that, say, for example, in the first chapter of First Timothy, after outlining his task and calling to Timothy's mind the opposition he will encounter, Paul in the twelfth verse tells his own experience of the grace of God in Christ, and in an exultant shout proclaims his gratitude that his life and work is such a signal demonstration of the power of the gospel. To read this passage as the effort of Paul to impart *information* is to miss completely its significance. To see in it an effort to impart *inspiration* is to put behind the timid Timothy the momentum of a mighty life and to fire a youthful heart with the flaming zeal of a veteran. One other point must be recognized, and that is the *human* element in all of this attitude of Paul to his younger brothers. He does not call them brothers, but his children. He is their spiritual father; they are his children in the faith. No man ever grows up in the eyes of his father. We are always children to our parents. There is on record an incident related of a mother who lived to the great age of over a hundred years, exclaiming on the death of her eldest daughter, who passed away at the ripe age of threescore and sixteen: "O the dear little darling! We never hoped that she would grow up."

Another point may have had some weight. Not only the missionary task and the human relation authorize the attitude Paul assumes in these pages, but the growing tendency of *professionalism* may have influenced him more than has been recognized to lay the emphasis on *paternalism*. He could not be blind to the fact that Church organization might fast degenerate into professionalism and that the petrifying processes of a

mere mechanical system might speedily choke up the fountains of personal and vital relations. Paul's conception of the Church is not that of a machine, but an organism. It has power, but it is *heart* power; it has functions, yet these are not mechanical, but vital.

SECOND TIMOTHY

In Second Timothy the scene shifts again. Paul is once more in prison, with no hope of release. To the personal sufferings he has been called upon to undergo is added the grief that all his friends are gone—some, sad to say, back to the world, others off to distant fields of labor. This leaves him lonely and sad. Where is the buoyancy and brilliance of the first imprisonment that gave rise to such letters as Philippians and Colossians? It does not exist. He has no time nor strength to fight over the old battles or to enterprise new conquests. He has only time and strength to sing his swan song. To whom shall he pen his last will and testament save to Timothy, his dearly beloved son? And so with trembling lips he begins. Like all the expressions of age, it is predominantly experiential. The apostle grows reminiscential. He begins with his life as a Jew; traces the influence of the gospel in his own character; takes in his sweep the experiences of Timothy too (3: 10-13) as witness of what he has endured for the gospel; exhorts him to a continuance in steadfastness; strives by all the power of logic and the appeal of love to instill into the marrow of the young man the iron tonic of his own faith and zeal; and after giving this glance at the past and sizing up present conditions confronting the Church and the Christian preacher, he looks with steady gaze and undimmed faith into the future. And as he looks forward his eyes brighten, his bosom heaves, his heart expands, his hope enlarges, earth recedes, his surroundings are transformed; Cæsar drops out of sight, and Christ appears; the executioner's ax is welcomed as the key which opens paradise; the block is a stepping-stone to the

skies; and under the momentum of a life lived upon earth, but based on eternal principles, "Paul the aged" sweeps through the gates of a felon's death to wear the crown of eternal life and hear the music of the Master's gracious greeting (4: 6-8).

THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON

When Paul sent the letter to the Colossians, he sent along with Tychicus, the bearer of that epistle, another man, Onesimus, who carried to Philemon the writing we are to study now. (Col. 4: 7-9.) It might seem at first glance a great waste of time to give much consideration to the few verses that make up this little letter; but aside from the fact that this is the only strictly personal correspondence that has survived from the pen of Paul, there is a fund of intrinsic interest and beauty in the writing itself which will ever attract the attention of students of the New Testament as they read the romantic story of the rescue of the runaway slave and see in this little scrap of literature one of the finest glimpses of a truly Christian gentleman which the libraries of the world can show.

True it is that this epistle was not appreciated by some in early times. Jerome reports some as saying: "Either this epistle is not Paul's, or else, if it is Paul's, there is nothing in it for edification." The counter statement of this father is, of course, far more true. His judgment is: "It is flooded with gospel grace." Certainly the greatest New Testament students have not been chary in their praise of this beautiful gem in the casket of our canon. Bengel declared that it was "wonderfully polite." Francke said: "The one Epistle to Philemon surpasses by far all the wisdom of the world." Bishop Ellicott characterized it as "an exquisite piece of persuasive tact and an enduring monument of Christian courtesy." Renan, one of the most expert of literary critics, called it "a veritable *chef-d'œuvre* in the art of letter-writing." And we may

rest assured that these testimonies are true. No letter shows Paul in a better light, for here all the professional is in abeyance and the purely personal comes to the front. The apostle and the polemic retire, and only the Christian and the gentleman appear.

Great performances we have had from the pen of Paul! The pastoral pleading to the Thessalonians, the emancipation proclamation to the Galatians, the great application of Christianity to social conditions we have in Corinthians, the wonderful survey of the religious history of the race we have studied in Romans, the marvelous sweep of Christological conception we see in Colossians—all these mighty utterances are well worthy of all our effort to interpret them. But in all these there is the excitement of conflict, the inspiration of a great theme, the heat of controversy, the marshaling of logic, and the consciousness of intellectual and spiritual supremacy over all opponents. But in this small writing all these large things are lacking. Who is going to get much inspiration out of the sewers of Rome? What chances for effective climax in the short space of twenty-five verses? True; but here is where the great man really shines, not with the light borrowed from his surroundings, but in the clear atmosphere of his own largeness of soul. And, after all, God's great purpose was not to make a preacher or a polemic or a pastor out of Paul, but a large-hearted majestic *man*. To transform the narrow, bigoted soul, the proud Pharisee, into the great apostle to the Gentiles is indeed a work of divine grace; but to make this apostle a father to one of society's scapegoats takes a grace of even a diviner sort, for it is much easier to meet the demands of any profession than to come up to the measure of manhood. Doubtless there have been perfect physicians, lawyers, teachers, preachers; but only God has been a perfect man, and only those whose life is hid with Christ in God are able to approximate this perfection in the truest and highest sense. It is well to re-

peat that Paul is never greater than he is in these few lines which breathe so graciously the spirit of the true Christian gentleman.

As the letter is so short, we need not bother ourselves with anything like a formal analysis, but simply set forth the places, the persons, and the problem involved.

The Places

The places involved are two: one away to the west (Rome, where Paul is in captivity) and the other away to the east (Colosse, the home of Philemon). They were distant, as the crow flies, about nine hundred miles, or about twelve hundred miles by the usual land or water routes. Some, indeed, by reason of this great distance have thought that it was not Rome where Paul was in prison, but Cæsarea, owing to the fact that it would be much easier for a runaway slave to reach the Asian prison than the Roman. But such reasoning forgets two things: First, that "all roads led to Rome" in that day; and, second, that a runaway slave would see to it that he put as much distance as possible between himself and his aggrieved master and would look upon the crowded imperial city as the best place in the world in which to lose himself.

Colosse belonged to the district of the Lycus Valley, in Asia Minor, a section of the country to which Luke refers in Acts 19: 10, when he declares that, as a result of Paul's continuing in Ephesus, "All they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." While Paul himself does not seem to have preached at Colosse (Col. 2: 1), yet this evangelistic work seems to have been superintended by him from Ephesus as a center.

The Persons

The persons in Rome are, first of all, Paul and Timothy, whom he unites with himself in the salutation. Presumably it is just at the middle of the two years'

imprisonment referred to in the last verse of Acts. Sufficient time has elapsed for the news of the condition of affairs at Colosse to reach Paul, and enough time has passed for Onesimus to find his way thither.

The home at Colosse seems to be made up of three persons. First, there is Philemon. Scholars report two other occasions when this name figures in literature; both times, too, it is in connection with Phrygia, from which our present character hails. One of these instances is in the "Birds" of Aristophanes, the other is the familiar story of Philemon and Baucis as narrated in Ovid's "Metamorphoses." As to the present holder of the name, it is sufficiently clear from references in this letter (1) that he was a convert of Paul (verse 19), (2) that he was rich enough to own slaves and afford hospitality (verses 2, 5, 7), and (3) that he was an earnest Christian worker. In proof of this last point these two glimpses suffice: Paul speaks of the Church in his house and also classes him as one of his fellow workers.

The second person, Apphia, is presumably the wife of Philemon. At any rate, the term "sister" applied to her (verse 2) means that she is a Christian believer. The third name among the addressees, Archippus, is taken to refer to their son. Once again (Col. 4: 17) Paul refers to him in the ever-memorable words: "Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it." From this it is evident that he held office in the Church, especially in view of the fact that in this letter Paul calls him a "fellow soldier," a name not elsewhere applied by him save to Epaphroditus (Phil. 2: 25).

But, however great and interesting all these names, by far the most important person in this letter is not Paul the writer, nor Philemon the recipient, but Onesimus the runaway slave. The fact that he figures at all in the New Testament literature is positive proof of the transcendent character of Christianity. The literature of Greece and Rome for the most part held up the slave

either to ridicule or reproach; usually it was both. Poets and philosophers vied with each other in heaping degradation upon this member of society. In fact, some went so far as to deny that the slave class was a section of society at all, even going to the extreme of denying the slave the ordinary faculties of a man. Aristotle, in his "Politics," declared, "The slave is simply a living chattel"; and in his "Ethics" he affirmed, "The slave is a living tool, and the tool is a lifeless slave." Varro, among the Romans, in classifying the implements of agricultural life, says: "There are three sorts: vocal, semivocal, and mute. The vocal ones are *slaves*, the semivocal are *oxen*, and the mute are *plows*." Even the Roman Digest declared that a slave had no legal rights. Being without protection of law, it is no wonder that he frequently became a defier of law; and some of the bloodiest chapters of ancient history are those which describe the outbreaks of the slave classes roused to revenge against the conditions that enthralled them.

But more than being a slave, Onesimus was a Phrygian slave; and throughout all ancient literature it is the Phrygian slave that takes the palm for all that is supremely villainous. But to cap the climax, he was a runaway slave, and probably a thief as well (verse 18). And so with this triple incubus of infamy, this degraded creature, despised by the very social order that had robbed him of every inspiration of manhood and degraded him to the low level of a beast—this wretch hies himself off to Rome, the common cesspool of ancient civilization, with doubtless no other thought than to drown whatever remnant of conscience he may have possessed in the iniquity there rampant and to wreak what vengeance he could upon the social order that had made his misery possible. But the runaway slave met the great Christian preacher, and all was changed. How did he meet him? Did he happen to run across his fellow countryman Epaphras? and was he by him lured into the presence of the loving evan-

gelist? Or was he in need of food? and did necessity strengthen his memory sufficiently to recall in some dim fashion the name of the man who had such a hold on the heartstrings of the old home in Colosse? Or was it that conscience, so long asleep, began to rouse itself amid an environment of wickedness greater than that his own heart had ever conceived? Was it any one of these things that finally caused him to wend his way to the hired house of "Paul the aged"? We know not. But, at any rate, he met Paul, was converted, and evidently gave great promise of becoming a most efficient Christian worker. What a miracle that Paul should interest himself in a slave, and that this slave should become his friend, yea, more, a beloved son, begotten in his bonds! Aristotle was fond of saying that it was not right for one to be a friend to a slave any more than to a horse or an ox. But Paul's vision was keener; he could see distinctions that were impossible to "the mighty Stagirite." By the wisdom not of this world he could see the difference between an animal and a man. Christianity does easily what science dares not attempt: it sees the divine spark in even the most degenerate types. So Paul could love a slave.

The Problem.

All this might have been, and yet we should not have been studying the letter to-day. The letter exists because of the problem that was precipitated by the conversion of Onesimus. As his name indicates, he had once given promise of being a good slave, for his master had dubbed him "Profitable." Now he had proved recreant; and had not Paul crossed his path and Christ entered into his heart, doubtless he would have gone to his death a degenerate. But the moment he was converted the gospel laid upon him the responsibility of confession and restitution so far as lay in his power. But the sequel, if he should be returned to his master! Who could doubt, knowing the condition of the times, what would happen? Crucifixion was considered a mild

punishment in such a case as this. In fact, the cross was the constant terror of the slaves who incurred even the slight displeasure of their masters. One of the most pathetic passages in all literature is where a slave in one of Plautus's plays protests: "Don't threaten me; I know the cross will be my grave. There were my ancestors planted—father, grandfather, great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather." Think of a man whose only genealogical tree was a forest of crosses! For what else could Onesimus hope? Still the law of Christian discipleship is inexorable; he could not be a true Christian in Rome and not make an honest effort to right the wrong he had done his master in Colosse. Therefore he is willing to return, though it takes him from the side of his one friend and may carry him to a cross. Paul's phase of the problem was this: Here was a grand illustration of the power of the gospel, "a brand snatched from the burning." He had already written a letter to the Romans (and a majestic message it was); but here was a living epistle, a slave transformed into a saint, a beast made into a brother, and his heart was burning with love to his benefactor. He was eager to stay with him and by a life of constant service to some extent repay the infinite debt of gratitude he owed to the man who had befriended him in the hour of his sore distress. What an argument for the religion of Jesus did Paul see in the slave Onesimus, now a redeemed freeman in the Lord! What salvation might come to the slums of Rome if he could only retain this miracle of grace as an advertisement of Christ's power to cleanse and purify! There is no doubt that this little letter, under the stress of these temptations, caused Paul more real effort than all his fulminations in Galatians and his inspiring exhortations in Romans and Corinthians. There he was stultifying his foes and edifying his friends; but here he is crucifying himself as he tears out his very heart (verse 12) and sends away from him the man that would mean most to his work and to himself in the toll-

someness and lonesomeness of his Roman imprisonment.

But not Onesimus's fears nor Paul's desires are allowed to control. Philemon, the master, has rights that must be respected, and this is the phase of the problem that decides the question. Paul pens his greatest sentence when he declares (verse 14): "But without thy mind I was not willing to do anything." For here he declares that he will not sacrifice right at any time or under any circumstances to pleasure or convenience. And Paul never rises higher than when in verse 8 he declares: "Though I have all boldness to enjoin, yet for love's sake I rather beseech." But while Philemon has his rights as a master, he has also his duty as a Christian; and to this sense of Christian obligation Paul makes appeal as well: "For perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldst have him forever; no longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved."

Need we ask whether Paul was disappointed in his appeal? Philemon could not refuse if he were the Christian Paul thought him to be and knew he was (see verses 4-7); and it needs only a bit of historic imagination to picture the home-coming when Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus welcomed back the penitent Onesimus. Here is indeed a real prodigal's return, with no elder brother's malice to mar the beauty of the scene.

And right here in the heavenly atmosphere of this far-away Colossian home scene let us, following the order of our English Bible, take our leave of Paul and with him render grateful thanks to God for the power of a gospel that makes God's kingdom come on earth. No wonder that when his time came to leave this world the man who in the providence of God had made this scene possible cried out in humble yet exultant faith: "I am ready to go; . . . henceforth I have a crown."

Thought Questions

1. What are the pastoral epistles? Why so called? And should our study begin from the viewpoint of the Church, the institution, or from that of the personal relations of Paul and his pastoral helpers?

2. What are the biographical facts, hints, and suppositions available concerning Titus?

3. Show the appropriateness to the people of Crete of the letter to Titus.

4. Give the story of Timothy, including Paul's friendship for him and his services to his father in the faith.

5. How do you meet the critical difficulties arising from the many personal reminiscences in the letters to Timothy and Titus, matters that they must certainly have been quite familiar with?

6. What sort of a change of environment meets you as you pass from Titus in his diocese on the Island of Crete to Timothy in the city of Ephesus?

7. What change in Paul's own condition had occurred between the writing of the first and the second letters to Timothy, and how did that change affect the outlook and mood of the writing?

8. What three characteristics of the letter to Philemon impart to this brief writing an interest out of proportion to its length?

9. Rome, Colosse—the place where Paul was imprisoned and the place where Philemon lived—what story do the names and geographic separation of these two cities tell of the extension and influence of the gospel in Paul's later days?

10. Give the story of the flight and conversion of Onesimus and explain its significance in the light of the ancient institution of slavery.

11. In what difficult situation was Paul placed by his new relation to Onesimus, and how did he meet it?

VII. TWO CATHOLIC BROTHERS

Passages for Daily Readings

Sunday.—Short References to These Brethren of Our Lord. Matthew 13: 55; John 7: 5; 1 Corinthians 15: 7; Acts 15: 13; Galatians 1: 19; Jude 1: 1; James 1: 1.

Monday.—The Destruction of Evil. Jude 3-16.

Tuesday.—The Salvation of the Sinning and a Doxology. Jude 17-25.

Wednesday.—Wisdom for the Tempted. James 1: 2-18; 3: 13-18.

Thursday.—Common Yet Fatal Delusions. James 1: 22-27; 2: 1-9, 14-25.

Friday.—More Fatal Delusions. James 3: 1-12; 4: 1-10, 13-17; 5: 1-6.

Saturday.—Counsels of Wisdom. James 5: 7-20.

Introduction

HAVING passed rapidly in review the Pauline letters, we now take up the remaining books of the epistolary section of the New Testament. Here we have some of the most potent and precious documents in all our Christian literature; but at the same time these writings present many perplexing problems as to date, authorship, occasion, and general purpose. In order to keep our study of these portions of Scripture from degenerating into a mere critical *mélange*, we shall have to keep the individual books constantly before our minds and seek to study, not *about* them, but to study *the books themselves*. Seven of these epistles have come down to us under the caption of "catholic" or "general," the idea being that they are sent primarily to no particular Church or individual, but have as their destination the Church universal. The term is, of course, unhappy, for more than one of the seven have a particular destination; but as it is a traditional formula of identification, we shall retain it. For our present

study we will select two of these seven, Jude and James. If these writings are to mean much to us, we shall have to let them tell their own story. We begin, then, with the shorter of these two and, opening our New Testament at the

EPISTLE OF JUDE,

we ask one or two questions: Who was the author? Who were the recipients? What was the occasion that united these in correspondence? What is the present-day message of this lightning stroke of righteous indignation?

As to the matter of authorship, the answer is brief—in fact, too brief for our critical curiosity—and so we have to supplement its brevity with our own opinion. “Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and brother of James,” from my viewpoint, means the Jude of Matthew 13: 55, the brother of Jesus, who, with James and the rest of his family, withheld his faith until after the resurrection. (See John 7: 5 and 1 Cor. 15: 7.) The addressees are even less definite, and who they are no man can say. “Those that are called beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ” is a description that would fit any Christian congregation from the sands of Sahara to the snows of Caucasus or from the Ganges to Gibraltar.

But though the answers to our first two questions are not as full as we should like them to be, when we come to our third and fourth queries we have in the letter itself sufficient to satisfy all legitimate curiosity. From verses three and four we gather that the author was just about to engage in writing a letter concerning what he calls their “common salvation” when a necessity of an altogether different character confronted him. He was suddenly forced to desist from this purpose and write hurriedly to them to warn them of a sudden and huge danger that had arisen and to instruct them how they were to resist it and so contend earnestly for the faith. It is necessary for us, then, to recognize that this epistle is the sequel to an impertinent interruption—a thing that was, so to speak, thrust upon the

writer; a thing that he did not start out primarily to do. This may account in part for its fierceness of attack and its somewhat relentless spirit—a sort of good work to which the author was provoked. What, then, is the occasion that precipitated this tirade? “Certain men” had crept in privily and were using the cloak of Christianity to cover up all sorts of horrid and wicked practices. It was a time then of great religious defection on the part of many. Jude feels it to be his bounden duty to step in and save his readers, if he can, from being caught in this eddy of evil influence. He therefore seeks to do two things: (1) To show that all history, all nature, and all prophecy are a unit in declaring destruction to such sinners; and (2) to use every argument of a positive sort to instruct and inspire his readers and show what is the duty of a Christian in such a time of religious defection. This first or negative part is treated in verses five to sixteen. This section may, indeed, be called

The Doom of Evil

It is inwrought in our consciousness; and yet we, along with Jude’s readers, have to be constantly reminded of this fundamental fact of the universe in which we live and of which we are a part. In a time when unbelief and error swoop down with all their terrifying power we need to look back, says Jude, at the monuments standing all along the shores of moral history. The testimony is unanimous. Whether we view evil in its corporate capacity or in its individual expression, the message of doom is the same. “Chosen people,” though twice saved, are not immune from the doom of a righteous God. Angels in everlasting bonds kept under darkness attest the awful fact, and cities in their ruin add their mute and mournful witness to the solemn truth that sin must be destroyed. These errorists, however, in spite of the eloquent protests of history and in spite of the supreme example of Michael, unite in their threefold stream of evil—unbelief, sensu-

ality, and rebellion. They are the legitimate descendants of three of the most degenerate types known to human annals: Cain, the first murderer; Balaam, the false prophet; and Korah, the archrebel. It took all these three to furnish the spirit that animates these horrid sinners.

These three, a veritable triple alliance of infernal diabolism, unite their streams of pollution in these sinners of Jude's day. How can he hold out any hope for them? Their character has determined their doom; for not only does Scripture prophesy beforehand their destiny, but the very material order marshals itself in mute but menacing condemnation. Hence all nature is ransacked for hideous images to picture forth the danger they threaten to the cause of truth and the doom they are to call down upon themselves from the hands of a just and holy God. They are, says Jude, beginning at the lowest depth, hidden rocks lurking like skulking enemies to cause shipwreck to the Church, hiding themselves in the guise of brethren and even capable of the deep-dyed hypocrisy of partaking of the sacred love feast and, while pretending to shepherd the flock, are found to be fearlessly feeding their own greediness. The sky is then searched for a figure. They are clouds without water, deceptions of the grossest type, promising refreshment but giving none, having no stability, but whisked hither and thither by the ever-changing winds. Earth then is visited for another symbol of these sinners. They are late autumn trees, bare trunks and branches stripped of both fruit and foliage, standing in all their horrid nakedness like gaunt skeletons. But for them no future vernal breezes shall bring the boon of life. They are twice dead and plucked up by the roots. They have severed themselves from their only fount of life in that they have denied their Lord. Hence they have no vitality, no fruitage, no future save putrefaction. The deep is again visited. This time they are wild waves of the sea leaping and plunging in confusion and disorder—emblem of that infinite unrest

that pervades the soul of the ungodly. And as they fret and lash themselves by reason of the storms that beat upon them, their only output is the froth and foam of their own ineradicable shame. These awful figures reach their climax at last when the stellar world is appealed to and a likeness is suggested between these unstable, ever-shifting, uprooted characters and the wandering stars—that is, sinning worlds which have broken over the bounds of their appointed station and go hurtling through the infinite void, for which there remains nothing save the blackness of darkness forever.

The writer's characterization and condemnation is complete. The force of nature can go no farther. He has, however, a word of prophecy with which he closes this doleful section. This he finds in the apocryphal book of Enoch, wherein the death knell of evil and ungodliness is sounded by no less an arm than that of Jehovah himself, and the hearts of myriads of his saints are made to rejoice with him in the eternal victory of righteousness over sin.

We now come to the second or positive section of Jude's deliverance (verses 17-25). If in a time of religious decline we are to look to the past and trace the terror of the Lord as it registers itself in the destruction of all who incarnate principles of ungodliness, we do well. But there is still another duty, that of constructively devoting ourselves to the maintenance of our faith, to the development of our Christian character, and to the largest expression of our religious energy. So Jude issues

Three Suggestions of a Positive Sort

(1) A call to *remember* the words of the messengers who first brought to them the knowledge of Christ; (2) a call to *keep* themselves in the love of God by praying in the Holy Spirit and ever looking with earnest confidence for the realization of the fullness of life that the Lord Jesus has so mercifully promised and provided; and (3) a call to *service* in the interest of oth-

ers, made all the more imperative because at a time of religious defection the hearts of all men run to and fro, and in the surging seas of doubt and storm there are many that may be saved if proper means are enterprised.

The need for energetic action is seen by Jude to grow out of the fact that at such times of sifting there are at least three classes of people. As he says (verses 22, 23), there are some who are simply *in doubt*. On these have mercy: a word, a look, a handgrasp, a misconception cleared up, a new theory of religion suggested, a friendly deed—almost anything will win their wavering wills. They are spiritually in unstable equilibrium. Many of these can be drawn into the kingdom in a time of religious defection by a simple and sincere proof of Christ's presence in the life of his followers.

There is a second class. These have acquired a downward momentum; they are on the way to the devouring flame. If anything is done, it must be done quickly. Some, says Jude, if they are saved at all, must be snatched and snatched immediately; but they can be and will be if Christians are faithful to their obligations and opportunities. They will be brands plucked from the burning and will add all the more glory to the Saviour's diadem.

But there is a third class. Such times of religious defection reveal deep-seated iniquities incarnate in human form, so rotten in their inherent depravity, so hellward bent in their moral momentum, so close to the brink of the bottomless pit that we dare not exercise over them even a savior's sympathy unless it be accompanied by a wholesome fear of personal contamination. To such awful depths can ungodliness go as to endanger the foundations of the godly themselves!

The Triumphant Benediction

The letter, however, does not stop here. Who is sufficient for these crises precipitated by the inroads of irreligion and infidelity such as are characteristic of a

time of religious defection? Jude's final and conclusive answer is given in one of the most consoling, comprehensive, and convincing benedictions the New Testament contains. What are we to contrast with the forces of ungodliness rampant in their rage and clothing themselves in all the spacious and specious dress of hypocrisy and heinousness? These, says Jude, and says history, and says Scripture, and says nature, are all temporary. Evil is weak. Its instruments are ephemeral; its power is puerile; its glory is shame; its dominion is of short if painful duration. All the real glory, the real majesty, the real dominion, the real power before all time and now and for evermore belong to God, not to the ungodly. And he is able not only to guard us from stumbling here in times of religious defection and spiritual dearth, but he is able also to set us once for all before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy. Wherefore Jude would say with his brother James: Count it the greatest joy of all when you fall upon times of religious defection; for these are the times when the atmosphere of earth is clarified, when the faith of men is purified, and when the population of God's true kingdom is multiplied.

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

From the short and sharp bugle blast of Jude we now turn to the longer and more comprehensive message of his brother James. While Jude is occupied with one single temptation, James discusses well-nigh the whole round of possible tests that moral probation supplies. A full volume could be written on the mere history of criticism pertaining to this book; but we have to content ourselves with giving a fairly full discussion of the contents and the bare mention of two or three other points. Our first task is to determine, if possible

The General Subject of the Writing

Some critics seem to be unable to discover any great theme in these several chapters and so call it simply a

string of detached moral precepts, hanging together with more or less affinity, logical or verbal. Such, however, is the inevitable outcome of that criticism, whether conservative or radical, which looks upon it as a mere handful of religious precepts. If we look at it as the contribution of a great mind to the understanding of the phenomena of the religious life, particularly as that life has been revealed in its ultimate perfection in Christ and is committed to the care and cultivation of the Christian community, we shall, I think, get a little closer to the message of the book and at the same time gain large enlightenment for the proper direction of our own thinking.

By consulting verse two of chapter one we see that the theme he is going to discuss is the attitude that his readers should assume to the varied trials that come into their life. In other words, he sets for himself one of the standing questions of all religious investigation, How shall a man react upon his environment at any particular time so as to advance and not imperil his religious character? We cannot develop moral fiber save through the testing and toughening processes of trial. Therefore we are to count it all joy when trials come. We may fall under them, but that will be due to our lack. If we use them aright, we shall ascend to fullness of stature. Certainly, then, some great principle is necessary if we are to discover the art of properly using the experiences of life. This gives James a chance to set forth his conception of the really fundamental positive principle of religion. This, he says, is wisdom. To live aright, man must have this. God is its Author and only Source. To get it we must ask of him, and we must ask in the proper spirit of whole-hearted desire. This is James's description of this great boon: "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy" (3: 17). If a man has this, he is thoroughly prepared

for all the varied assaults that environment can possibly make.

Wisdom Applied in Poverty or Plenty

James shows by several illustrations what he means by the application of this "wisdom" to the manifold testings of life. The first two are very general. In chapter 1, verses 9-11, he instances the commonest phase of temptation—namely, that arising from the possession or non-possession of material goods. The man that is possessed with the divine wisdom can glorify either poverty or plenitude, for he knows that wealth is but a passing thing, like the flower of the field. In chapter 1, verses 12-18, he indicates another temptation of a most universal kind—namely, the temptation to credit all the tragic results of our temptations to God. No, says James, the man that has the divine wisdom in him will repudiate such a slander upon the name and character of God. If our temptation ends disastrously, it is because we have been baited by our own desire. This desire, when married to the will, conceives sin; and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.

Having disposed of these two most universal types of temptation, the writer now proceeds to more specific ones growing out of the corporate relations of his readers. They constitute a community of Christians. They assemble for worship in their meeting place from time to time. What are some of the temptations that assail men under such conditions? One of the most usual is the temptation to substitute

Hearing for Doing

In James's day, as in ours, many people seemed to think that listening to sermons, saying prayers, and singing hymns were all the "service" they should perform. In some short and sharp sentences he calls all such back from this folly, and in the spirit of Him who said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them," James is emboldened to give a description

of how real religion should make itself known. The manifestation of the religious spirit, says this common-sense teacher, does not consist so much in what we hear as in how we heed—not *talk* but *walk* is its true criterion. It does not rush through a man's mouth in a veritable Niagara of verbiage so much as it flows through his hands in gentle and sympathetic ministration to the helpless and permeates his life with the sweetness that always distills from the fragrant flower of a pure heart (1: 19-27).

The next community temptation the author discusses is a very modern as well as a very ancient one—the test presented when the rich and the poor meet together in the house of God. In chapter 2, verses 1-9, we have one of the most biting satires contained in all literature. It is the picture of the

Gushing Usher,

who fawns on the rich and frowns on the poor, who with much parade sails down the aisle, bowing and scraping, to carry Colonel Clotheshorse (see verse 3) to a fine seat where he can see and be seen, and with scant ceremony chucks old Patch-Pants into a dingy corner or uses him as a floor mat under his own pew. And all this, says James, because you have not sense enough to tell the difference between a man and what he happens to have or not to have upon his back or on his fingers! If you had, says James, the divine wisdom of Him who saw in Dives a candidate for hell and in Lazarus a child of Abraham, you would not formulate such wicked decisions simply on the basis of broadcloth! It is the sheerest folly to seek to maintain in such an atmosphere of respect of persons that we are followers of Jesus. Any sort of wisdom would at least suggest a suspense of judgment. To kowtow to one man because he wears rings and to kick out another because he wears corns is taking rather snap judgment. The rings on one hand may be stolen, and the corns on the other may be the reward of honest toil. Now, of course,

James does not say *they are*, but he does say that the gushing usher and the fawning congregation never took the trouble to *raise the question*. This in itself is the basis of his condemnation, and his Christlike criticism is not untimely even for our day.

Another temptation (verses 9-13) arises from our attempt to run the moral life on the departmental plan. We are tempted to do the commands that suit our convenience or our preference and forego those that cross our purposes. This, says James, strikes at the integrity of individual character. We are to be integers, not fractions; whole and holy men, not fragments. Hence he pleads for

The Solidarity of Duty

If a man have the divine wisdom, he will see that God is one and his law is one, that the attitude of our wills should be constant. Only so can we arrive at that standard necessary to pass muster when we are judged by a law of liberty.

In chapter 2, verses 14-26, we have in all probability the most familiar passage in this writing. It has figured very largely in theological controversy and is, doubtless, the main reason why Luther, for example, called James "an epistle right strawy." It is from our analysis of the author's purpose his way of presenting another temptation—namely, the temptation of confusing saying and doing. He uses the very graphic illustration of the shivering and hungry beggars and, under the parable of the wordy but workless philanthropist, satirizes the folly of thinking that things *are* so simply because we *say* they are so. You might as well, says he, expect a freezing back to rise in temperature or an empty stomach to cease its gnawing simply by the mere utterance of the words, "Be warm," "Be filled." Just so the constant reiteration of the mere profession "I have faith" does not convey any information at all to a sensible man. The man on the street knows more than to be fooled by such a flimsy faith. *Works, not words,*

are the channel through which real faith conveys the message of its presence.

Another community temptation is described in chapter 3, verses 1-12. It is that of too many seeking to become teachers or leaders. In fact, it gets so bad sometimes that there are no pupils and so many leaders that there are none to follow. Such a condition was on in James's time, and he hastens to deprecate it by showing the

Temptation of the Teacher

This is briefly to use his tongue more than he uses his head and his conscience. He is prone to forget that he occupies a position of prominence and so must receive a greater stress of judgment than the man in the ranks. The instrument of teaching is the tongue, and this is the most untamable of all our members. We can guide a large horse with a bridle; we can steer a big ship in spite of adverse winds and waves by a finger thrust on the tiller.' But these figures, despite their vividness, fail to convey save in an exceedingly feeble way the idea of the disproportion between the size of the tongue and the amount of evil it will accomplish unless it be moved at the impulse of a divinely bestowed wisdom. James had seen too many Jerusalem mobs under the influence of tongues set on fire of hell itself to fail to see that nothing is so like it as the tiny torch by which whole forests may be swept to destruction. Against the insidious temptation of a bifurcated tongue—blessing God and cursing men—all nature cries aloud. Every fountain and every fig tree is an eloquent and convincing protest to the man that has the divine wisdom. This leads up naturally to the contrasted conditions of those who are prompted by that wisdom which is earthly, sensual, and devilish and those who are possessed of the higher and divine sort (3: 13-18).

Chapter 4, verses 1-10, occupy themselves with the

Temptation of the Divided Life

which consists of the warfare between divine will and

human desire. This leads up to the philosophy of the failure of prayer, and in the midst of this section the author hangs high his noble plea for a religion of the whole heart.

The Temptation to Censoriousness

is next treated (4: 11, 12), and then follows a vivid remonstrance against too readily yielding to the temptation precipitated by *the call of the city*. Here James faces a modern problem and diagnoses a disease much prevalent in our day—namely, that of rushing into the city and leaving God and religion out of account. The moral insanity of such a procedure is equaled only by the mental aberration that prompts it. O, says James and say we all, for that divine wisdom that will keep people in the country, or, if they must come to the city, that will prompt them to bring God with them!

Chapter 5, verses 1 through 6, constitutes one of the most flaming invectives known to the New Testament. In fact, there is nothing like it save the scorching sentences that leap from the lips of Jesus himself as he inveighs against the pride and selfishness of Pharisaic bigotry. This is James's arraignment of tainted wealth wherein he elaborates on the

Temptations of Riches

Whether he is condemning a real condition or simply puts it in this realistic fashion to make his teaching more telling is hard to decide absolutely. But there is no doubt that in this passage this righteous soul rises to the greatest heights of denunciatory eloquence as the molten message of his holy fury rushes out in these all-consuming words of wrath.

Three Temptations or Trials

follow. These have to do, however, with those who are really Christian brethren. They are, first, the temptation to murmur and grow faint-hearted over the delay of the Lord's presence. To these James has two great

antidotes: We must not yield to this trial; for if we do, both the farmers of earth and the prophets of God will rebuke us, especially Job, who was both and who in both capacities suffered far beyond all ordinary experience and forever stands as an eloquent example of the end the Lord has in view in allowing temptation to cross the path of his children (5: 7-11). The second temptation is a natural sequel to the first. The tardiness of righteousness, the postponement of divine vengeance, the fact that "the mills of the gods grind slowly," is in itself the subtlest temptation of all. It assails the holiest hearts, and many men that have not yielded to the allurements of wealth or the enticements of lust have fallen victims to a desire for vengeance and have imprecated God and anathematized men. Wrath even of the righteous sort needs, says James, the curb of the divine wisdom whose yea is *yea* and nothing less, whose nay is *nay* and nothing more (5: 12).

Chapter 5, from verse 13 to the end, is taken up with showing that the divine wisdom is not exhausted in the matter of these more prominent—and, one might say, public—tests such as have been treated in the letter so far; but, as the writer contends, she is "gentle" and "easy to be entreated" and as such does not disdain to enter the lowly place of purely individual experience and radiate there the light and warmth of her heavenly benediction. She may be had in the hour of suffering to keep us from yielding to the pressure of bodily or mental pain; she may be had in the moment of exultant joy to temper our gladness lest we fall under the temptation of prosperity; she will, *if we will*, enter the sick chamber and with her beneficent presence dispel all doubt and fear and thus transform this doorway of death into a portal of life for this world and for that which is to come (5: 13-18). Nay, more, that crowning crime of the Christian community and the Christian individual, the ever-present temptation to

Spiritual Sloth,

even this can be resisted and cured by this divine impartation of wisdom. It will teach us, says James, the high art of converting men from sin, of saving souls from death, and by its constant employment we shall be able to hide from the gaze of men and angels a multitude of sins that otherwise would have harrowed human souls and grieved the heart of a gracious God (5: 19, 20).

Similarity of James to the Gospels

Three points at least must strike every thoughtful reader of this Epistle. No one can be blind to the vividness of the style, the ethical earnestness of the contents, and the marvelous similarity in substance that this Epistle presents to the teaching of Jesus. So far is this last statement true that some critics maintain that we have in James a veritable collection of the sayings of Jesus. Be this as it may, we can at least say that James, like his brothers Jude and Jesus, was fond of nature and wedded to reality. And in his teaching we have abundant proof that he too had a full share of that family trait so beautiful and powerfully present in their mother Mary, the setting forth of truth in highly figurative form (see Luke 1: 46-55). And so James, like his two brothers, took the whole world of nature and of man as the source from which to draw his stores of similes. The humdrum commonplaces of rural life, such as bridling a horse, waiting for rain, sowing seed, gathering crops, or quenching one's thirst at the refreshing spring, the broad expanse of the sea with its surging waves "driven by the winds and tossed," the ship's rudder and the starry world, the details of domestic life, rust and moths and even mirrors—all these and more become under his touch of genius tongues manifold to tell us two things—namely, that God in his wisdom has placed us in a world where trial and temptation abound on every hand; and, secondly, that it is our wisdom to seek wisdom from him in order that we may be able to

let patience have her perfect work in this world, so that, finally, we may enter into the realization of that blessed ideal held aloft by Him who was himself perfect through suffering: "Ye shall be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Thought Questions

1. What is the general difference in destination between the letters of Paul and the so-called Catholic Epistles?

2. What do we know about Jude, the writer of the letter that bears his name?

3. What seems to have been the occasion of the writing of the letter of Jude, and do you find any connection between that occasion and the fiery impetuosity of the style and matter?

4. What is the great truth that Jude's letter enforces, and with what varied figures of speech does he make his message vivid?

5. What is the positive counsel of the letter? Can you recite from memory the beautiful doxology with which it closes?

6. Do you distinguish James the author of the letter from the two apostles of Jesus who bore that name, and what do you know of him?

7. Is there anything in James's style and chosen range of illustration to suggest the teaching of Jesus and the family at Nazareth?

8. If there is a great unifying motive throughout the letter of James, what is it?

9. Name several of the temptations against which wisdom fortifies the Christian.

10. What important message has the letter of James for modern Christians?

VIII. PETER AND JOHN: LARGE LESSON FROM LITTLE LETTERS

Passages for Daily Readings

Sunday.—Peter and John in Evangelic History. Mark 1: 16-20; Luke 5: 8-10; 9: 49; Matthew 16: 13-20; 17: 1-4; John 18: 16-18; 20: 1-10; Acts 1: 15; 2: 14; 3: 1-4; 4: 13; 10: 9, etc.

Monday.—Faith Put to Proof. 1 Peter 1: 3-12.

Tuesday.—The Great Example. 1 Peter 4: 1-19.

Wednesday.—Growth in Holiness. 2 Peter 1: 2-11; 3: 14-18.

Thursday.—Types in the Early Church. 3 John 1-14; 2 John 1-13.

Friday.—Fellowship in Experience and Its Tests. 1 John 1: 1-2: 11.

Saturday.—The Hope and the Holy Life. 1 John 3: 1-24.

Introduction

ALL through the Gospels and the early parts of Acts we see two men constantly associated. No two participated more intimately in the companionship of our Lord during his earthly ministry than did Peter and John. Among the first to be called, they are prominent all the way through the public life, taking part in all the phases of Jesus's activities; and finally on the glad morning of the resurrection we find these two together, standing in mute but grateful wonder before the open tomb. Nor do the final scenes of the gospel story separate these men. Though so different in their personal characteristics, their spiritual attitudes, and their appreciation of their Master, we find that upon their shoulders falls the burden of inaugurating the Christian community in Jerusalem. Upon these two falls the brunt of the hostile attack of the Sanhedrin. Their minds have to guide the course of the new society; their voices become the mouthpiece of the new dispensation; their backs are made to quiver under the fear of threat-

ened beatings; and their hearts are the first to fill to overflowing with the glad joy that those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake alone are privileged to know. These two, so strongly united in the history of the early Church, could not fail to find a place in the literature; and so we find among the Catholic Epistles five of which are traditionally attributed to these true yokefellows.

Of course many critical objections are at once sprung. These cannot detain us at this time, but it would be dishonest not to acknowledge their presence and their force. Take the Johannine letters, for example. The identification of the author is one of the puzzles still to be untangled. No name of author appears in any of the three. In two of them we have the very definite description, "the elder"; but even this is complicated by the early tradition of two Johns—one the apostle, the other the presbyter or elder. And, finally, as to character; while we may grant that Third John is a true letter addressed to a specific person and dealing with a specific point, the destination and character of Second John is by no means so clear; and when we turn to the so-called First Epistle, in the absence of all destination and personal reference (save the vague notices in 2: 12-14 and 2: 18), we can hardly discover any epistolary element at all and hence have to class it as a homily or pastoral address.

And even with regard to the Petrine writings, though the influence of the practical Peter is much more in evidence in the New Testament than that of the mystic John, still we are far from unanimity even in his case. Some scholars deny Peter's hand in both the letters ascribed to him; very many deny only the second letter; very few allow both to be genuine. It may be freely confessed that, so far as external evidence goes, Second Peter deserves the title of the *black sheep* of the New Testament canon. Notices of its existence are far less early and less frequent than in any other case, and when we enter the realm of internal evidence several very ob-

stinate problems still vex the critic's skill. The undoubted connection of the second chapter with Jude raises a problem unparalleled in the New Testament; and the reference to Paul's letters as "scripture" (this seems to be the natural inference from 3: 15, 16) renders it highly improbable that all critics, even conservatives, will at an early date assent to the statement of 3: 1.

Even those who fight hardest to maintain the truthfulness of the traditional attitude find themselves hard beset. Zahn and Spitta, for example, while maintaining the authenticity of Second Peter, have to allow that Silvanus wrote the first letter, because the style and composition are so unlike; and, on the other hand, Ramsay, in order to save First Peter to Peter himself, feels it necessary (because of the type of persecution it refers to) to prolong the life of the apostle two decades or more, thus flying in the face of a well-nigh universal tradition which declares that Peter suffered martyrdom along with Paul during the persecution of Nero. In the face of all this undoubted diversity of opinion on the part of the very best and most reverent of scholars, we cannot afford to be dogmatic in the assertion of our opinions on the critical problems sprung by these writings.

A more profitable undertaking would be to pass by the purely theological and literary approach to these writings and seek to discover their religious purpose and value. For this is the really permanent phase of Bible interpretation. Theologies are outgrown and have to be from time to time constructed anew, and the emphasis and method of literary criticism are constantly changing; but there is a wonderful persistence inhering in the fundamental problems of the spiritual life, and all through the history of the Church the Bible in its various elements has proved itself wonderfully successful in demonstrating its own nature by answering so frequently and so fully one of its own demands: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that

proceedeth from the mouth of God." From this standpoint let us approach these writings.

THE MESSAGE OF FIRST PETER

Positively stated, Simon Peter is the apostle of hope. In fact, we should never have heard of him in Christian annals had this not been so. The first meeting Jesus had with him was signalized by these words: "Thou art Simon. . . . Thou shalt be called Peter." One of the last times he saw the Lord *hope* was still *his only hope*: "I have prayed for thee. . . . When once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren." If there was anything that Peter had to be grateful for, it was for the future tense; not what he *is* or *was*, but what he *hopes to become* is oftentimes in his experience the only saving clause. Consequently, when he calls his amanuensis Silas (5: 12), looks out from the midst of the persecutions he himself is doubtless soon to suffer in Rome (5: 13), sends the salutation of the Church there to the Christians scattered throughout the far-distant provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, his one fundamental purpose is to expatiate for their benefit and his own as well upon

The Function of Suffering in Developing Saints

And herein do we read the story of a mighty conversion on Peter's part. One of the most difficult things for him to do, even under the tuition of the great Teacher himself, was to associate, even in the remotest degree, religion and hardship. He was in the early years of his life absolutely dominated by the popular Galilean theology, which interpreted the Messianic hope in terms of physical power, material splendor, and the solid satisfactions of "the full dinner pail." The most difficult task Jesus had to accomplish was to show to Simon the relation between suffering and sainthood. Even after the great confession in Peter's words, "Thou art the Messiah," there was a long period before this disciple could be weaned from his early ideas and be taught that

the real function of the Messiah was not to be ministered unto, but to minister; not to wield a scepter, but to sacrifice his life. The First Epistle is the standing monument to Peter's docility as a pupil of Jesus. Here he is seen to have thoroughly mastered this lesson. So much so that he now sees hardly any other function for a Christian to observe save the function of suffering. He has learned, and learned completely, that saints and sons of God are developed and sustained by becoming partakers of the divine nature through suffering.

These Christians of the Asia Minor provinces are passing through the fiery furnace. Who more quick to see their plight or more able to hearten their souls than Simon Peter, the man whom Jesus himself had taught that the path of sovereignty lay through the dark defiles of disappointed hope and past the horrid brow of Calvary?

Hence, after a grateful benediction, he immediately plunges into the midst of the manifold trials by which they are beset and begins to extract sweetness out of their bitterness. Their basal ground for joy is in the fact that they, Gentiles as they are, are experiencing a salvation so great that prophets and angels have strained their eyes to look into it (1: 9-12). And in view of the fact that the expectations of these have not been put to shame, Peter advances his first great exhortation that they are to resist the suffering entailed by hope being often deferred and are to hold ever in view the transcendent ideal held aloft by Jesus himself when, away back on the Horns of Hattin, in the Sermon on the Mount, he declared: "Ye shall be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." This holiness is to come through obedience to the truth, and the truth is mediated through the word of the *living* and *abiding* God. As heathen they had known only dead and evanescent deities; hence to hear of the God and Father of a living Lord was indeed veritable "good tidings" (1: 13-25).

The second suffering in the stage of an ever-developing sainthood is that suffering entailed by the sacrifice

of all selfish and wicked desires and propensities and the reception of the babe's relation (2: 1-10). Here Peter applies two great principles laid down by Christ: (1) We must turn and become as little children; and (2) we must grow up until we become true sons and daughters, a royal, holy priesthood, and be builded together into a spiritual temple acceptable to God through Christ. This is Peter's version of the famous "Rock" passage, and surely there is not a shred here of the later papal perversion of that historic scripture (Matt. 16: 18).

A third source of suffering is that arising from the effort to maintain purity of life in the midst of an evil environment, so that misrepresentation on the part of hostile heathen shall be stopped and defamation turned to praise (2: 11, 12,; see also the echo here of Matt. 5: 16).

Another phase of suffering is that due to various subjections under which the Christian life must normally be lived. There is, first of all, in this section subjection to civil authority. In Peter's day this was a heathen authority and extremely harsh at times. Christianity brought freedom, but the Christian is counseled not to array himself against the civil power. Just as Jesus saw fit to live without rebellion under Herod and Pontius Pilate, so these his followers are to live in peace and purity even under the wicked régime of a Nero (2: 13-17).

The second phase of this subjection is that entailed by the duties of the family relation. Next to the civil power comes the authority in the home, for the home is the seed plot of the State. Very characteristically, Peter begins with the lowest element represented there, the household servants. To these he offers the inspiring example of Christ himself as their great Exemplar; and in a particularly vivid section (2: 22, 23) he gives us and them a glimpse into the trial court where Jesus so divinely suffered for righteousness' sake and out of that bitter experience brought salvation for the least and lowest of the race (2: 18-25).

Next to the servants the wives were the most despised section of the society of that time. So Peter turns to them and shows to them the implications and obligations of their Christian profession. The two perennial feminine frailties, loquacity and vanity, are gently rebuked and the true adornment of woman's character strongly depicted. What an inspiration to these heathen of long-lost Cappadocia, who had drudged through millenniums of misery both mental and moral, now under the teaching of the gospel to feel the uplifting influence of that princess in Israel, Sarah, the noble wife of God's first human friend, the faithful Abraham (3: 1-6)! Husbands too are exhorted to do their part in the spirit of a Christian's subjection to the obligations of a divinely ordered life, and this section concludes with an eloquent appeal for all who name the name of Christ to exhibit love and pity and humility even in the face of overbearing pride and insolence (3: 7-12).

From chapter three, verse thirteen, through chapter four, verse six, Peter expatiates upon

The Greatest Ideal He Knows of Suffering Innocence

This is none other than the Christ whom he at one time rebuked for even hinting that his pathway lay through pain. (See Matt. 16: 22.) But Jesus has demolished that old-time Satanic spirit that Simon showed on that occasion. To him now there are no limits to the suffering of the Saviour. He suffered here in the days of his flesh. Yes, but his sufferings did not cease when he expired upon the cross. From there he went to the abode of the spirits, and his self-sacrificing love did not permit him to tarry long amid the felicitations of the just; past these seers and saints of the olden time who fain would have detained him to lavish upon him their joyful and grateful praise; past these, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Isaiah; past these, the spirits of the just made perfect, he went, his momentum of mercy gathering since all time began—yea, since God himself dis-

covered the divineness of self-renunciation—carrying him on to those antediluvians who had resisted the appeals of the righteous Noah for one hundred and twenty years—to *these* Christ went and preached, and even they were forced to learn the lesson of sainthood achieved through suffering. The practical lesson from all this is very plain. If Christ is a sufferer, then it follows, “as the night the day,” that the Christian must be likewise a sufferer. This thought is still further expanded in the latter part of the fourth chapter, where Peter seems to remember the beatitude pronounced by Jesus upon those who suffer reviling for his sake (4: 14). He is careful to tell them that this suffering must be for the *name*—that name “Christian”—which ever since the time it was hurled at the brotherhood at Antioch has been a byword and a reproach. But, says Peter, while this may be the name by which men seek to shame us, it is in truth the only name by which we can glorify God (4: 15, 16). In chapter five we have in the first paragraph (verses 1-5) the appeal to the officary of the Church to maintain in a spirit of Christian humility their proper relations. The second paragraph (verses 6-10) is more general in its scope, exhorting all to resist steadfastly the common adversary, upbuoyed by the consciousness that they are partakers of the sufferings of the whole world brotherhood of Christians.

And so this letter is Peter’s second confession. His first was great and called down a benediction from the the lips of Jesus. That was his declaration that Jesus is the Messias. In the days of his flesh Jesus was not able to lead him to the second stage; for when he tried to tell his self-opinionated disciple what the function of the Messias was, he was rebuffed. But as the years passed time and trial and the grace of God wrought the miracle, and we have its proof in this epistle.

THE MESSAGE OF SECOND PETER

The second letter attributed to Peter emphasizes the same great religious truth as the first letter, but stated

in a somewhat more positive form. For in this epistle the outlook is not so much upon suffering as it is upon

Growth in Godliness

It seems to have as one of its inspirations the memory of that old-time request of the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith," and is by implication a proof that this request cannot be answered mechanically or by proxy. Hence in the forefront of the epistle we have the famous appeal for the constant and consecutive construction of the Christian character. It is based upon the revelation in Christ of all things that pertain unto life and godliness; its goal is that we become partakers of the divine nature; its method is human coöperation and the continual cultivation of the graces of the Christian revelation. We are to grow to and grow through the various stages of moral development till we come to be exponents of that love which is the very essence of God himself (1: 1-11).

Now, the soul feeds on personal relationships, and memory is one of the mightiest means to revive both in ourselves and in others the inspiration of such fellowships. Hence in the second part of this chapter the writer calls vividly to mind the transcendent revelation borne out of heaven when he and his companions were with Christ in the holy mount (1: 18). This is doubtless a reference to Peter's experience upon the Mount of Transfiguration, where the glory of the new dispensation—that of sonship through suffering and service—forever flung into the background the superseded splendor of both law and prophecy combined.

The second chapter urges this growth in godliness even in the face of moral lapse and religious retrogression. It is at such a time as this, if ever, that God's true children must hear his voice and heed his blest behests.

Chapter three is directed for the most part to the special point of meeting those who mocked at the failure of the Lord to come in accordance with the expectation

of the early Christians. In spite of the shock to their faith and in spite of the sneers of their foes, they must grow in godliness even under such an adverse condition. They are to remember that Jesus through his apostles has already told them that mockers should arise. They are not to forget that *time* forges no fetters for God—"one day is as a thousand years"—and they must recall that this very postponement of which their calumniators complain is in itself an emphatic illustration of God's redeeming mercy and is proof that he does not wish any to perish (3: 1-9).

But in contrast to all this unbelief and temptation to doubt, the writer avows his firm conviction that

"The Lord Will Come"

Great suddenness and cataclysmic social upheavals will be the concomitants of his coming—"the old order changeth, giving place to new"; a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness will ensue. How shall we be ready for this new habitat? "Grow in godlikeness!" responds our writer. "Give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight." The way to do this, he avers, is to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (3: 18). And so this letter, written in the name of that New Testament character which grew probably more than any other, emphasizes the great principle—that in a growing world with horizons ever enlarging and human systems ever being left behind, the only safe preparation for any and all readjustments to social, political, and religious conditions is to be found in maintaining personal union and communion with Christ; for he as the constant contemporary of all the centuries, "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," has ever been leading his disciples out of the narrow limitations of their earthly horizon into the ever-broadening and ever-brightening glory of their heavenly inheritance.

THE JOHANNINE LETTERS

Tradition is unanimous in attributing three of the seven Catholic Epistles to the apostle John; though the external testimony for the third epistle, by reason of its more private character, is not so strong as that for the other two. It is best, however, to begin with the

THIRD EPISTLE

because its message is so clear and its character as a real letter is so apparent. The moment we read it we feel that we are in the presence of real human beings—quite human, in fact, though they are members of the Church! There is, first of all, the writer who refers to himself simply as “the elder.” This of itself is sufficient to show that he is a man well known and of acknowledged authority, though, as the ninth verse indicates, he is suffering a rebuff in that one man at least is offering opposition. Then there is Gaius or Caius, the one to whom the note is addressed. From the description of his splendid character (verses 2-4) and of his noble “work” as a dispenser of hospitality we are led to infer that he is a well-to-do layman of true Christian spirit. Whether he is to be identified with the Gaius who was Paul’s host in Corinth (Rom. 16: 23), or Gaius of Macedonia (Acts 19: 29), or Gaius of Derbe (Acts 20: 4) will doubtless never be decided, as the name is a fairly common one. But the fact remains that the man whom this letter calls by that name will forever live in the annals of Christian biography as one of the choice products of Christ’s constructive power. A third character meets us in the person of Demetrius, who in all probability is the bearer of the letter and who, though hitherto unknown to Gaius, is well known to the writer and is vouched for by the threefold witness of “all men,” “of the truth itself,” and of the writer. He is held up as an example for Gaius to follow rather than the example set by the fourth character, Diotrephes, who is the villain of this brief drama. His name is as uncommon as those of Demetrius and Gaius are com-

mon. It means Zeus-nurtured; and this, taken in connection with the fact that he holds an official position in the Church which confers upon him a species of artificial power, seems to point to the reason why he is the storm center of these few lines.

In a few short but vivid strokes the writer, whose authority has been trampled upon, sketches the main features of this sower of schism. He loves to have pre-eminence; he has rebelled against the will of the writer; he indulges in wicked pratings; and, to cap the climax, is not only not receiving in the spirit of Christian hospitality the traveling missionaries, but is even forbidding and excommunicating those who do! Such rebellion is worthy of strong censure. And the writer does not hesitate to declare that when he comes he will bring its author to just punishment. These details as to the demeanor of Diotrophes have led some to infer that in all probability he was among the first experiments in episcopacy and that his sudden elevation puffed him up. He grew in *power* more rapidly than he grew in *piety* and hence became a marplot instead of a master builder. But, in addition to all these characters, we must mention some others not named, indeed, but none the less important, as they really constitute the cause of this contribution to our New Testament canon. These are the traveling missionaries, and their character and claims are set forth in verses five through eight. Though strangers to many a Church, they are brethren who have gone forth for the sake of the Name and have renounced all hope of gain. They are preachers of the gospel, and as they go from place to place they turn from the wealthy homes that friendly Gentiles gladly offer at times to the members of the Christian Church for hospitality. A beautiful glance is thus given us of the way the early Church sought to propagate the gospel. This was the apostolic method of sending forth missionaries and sustaining them. And as they in faith and zeal took up their difficult task the Churches from time to time gave them protection while in their midst

and when they left for other scenes of labor set them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of them as messengers of God, believing that thus they were becoming fellow workers for the truth (verses 5-8).

It is this section that explains the Third Epistle and at the same time, according to many scholars, throws a flood of light upon

SECOND JOHN

as well. Evidently "the elder" was the authority that sent forth these missionaries. Evidently, also, this is the *first* time his authority has been questioned. He hastens to gain in a certain Church a prominent Christian brother, Gaius, to his side by means of this urgent appeal. Gaius and Diotrophes belong to the same city, possibly to the same Christian community; and if we follow such scholars as Zahn and Schmiedel, this Church is the one addressed in Second John. The connecting link is verse nine of the third letter. When we read this sentence, "I wrote something unto the Church," our first question is, *What Church, and when?* If we turn to Second John and rid our minds of all prepossession that this letter was directed to an individual Christian lady, it will not take us long to see that there is strong presumption that this is the letter and this is the Church we are looking for. The subject of this appeal is the same—namely, hospitality to traveling missionaries—though the emphasis here is upon warning them against being deceived by false brethren. For, as the *Didache* a decade or so later vividly puts it, many deceivers were going hither and thither feasting upon the benevolence of the Christian congregations; but they were Christ traffickers, not Christ teachers! These special pleaders were doubtless going forth under the name of "progressives." The writer believes in progress, but he issues a strong protest against the progressives who do not abide in the teaching of Christ. The way to go forward is to go back to Christ. Progress though abiding is the author's recipe for all religious advance both in thought and in action.

As to the destination, though some scholars maintain that a Christian lady is addressed, many considerations stand out strongly attesting some particular Church. If this latter view be accepted, it must have been a prominent Church of Asia Minor, and of the possibilities Pergamum seems to be the most likely. At any rate, from the description of this Church in Revelation (2: 12-15), it is easy to see that its one great defect was that of too much toleration; and this is the specific point the Second Epistle of John warns against. Again, from Ramsay's researches we are led to believe that Pergamum, by reason of its beautiful location and commercial prestige, would be tempted to resent any interference from Ephesus, whence we must suppose these letters emanate. Thus, also, there is a peculiar emphasis and grace in the epithet "lady" as applied to the Christian brotherhood in this famous center. So that, taking all things together, we may infer that one day "the elder" met in Ephesus some of the members of the Pergamum Church who were walking in the truth. For this he records his devout gratitude. But they also told him of laxity on the part of some there in giving Godspeed to purveyors of "modern" views. This roused the fear of the aged pastor, and in loving haste he penned these few lines of rebuke and warning. He declared that paper and ink were poor substitutes for a heart-to-heart talk and in true Christlike spirit closed with a salutation from the Church at Ephesus, heirs together with them of the grace and mercy and peace of God.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

We have time and space for only a brief reference to this writing. We can hardly call it a letter, as it has neither salutation nor conclusion. It is best considered as a pastoral address designed, doubtless, not for a single individual like Third John, not for a single congregation like Second John, but rather for a great group of contiguous Churches and through them ultimately for the Church universal. Hence it has a rightful place among

the "Catholics," and without doubt it is to the weight of its presence among these that the two shorter epistles are indebted for their inclusion.

It is impossible for scholars to agree upon any analysis of this homily. Many have been constructed by great and learned men, but they do not commend themselves. In fact, the writer himself is just about as satisfactory on this point as any of his interpreters. His introduction is brief, but big with meaning. His theme is life eternal, his equipment for its elucidation is experience, and his motive in writing is that others may enter into the fellowship which he enjoys. In the course of his appeal he combats certain errors propagated by false teachers, among whom we may detect indications of Judaizers, Gnostics, Docetists, and possibly the teachings of Cerinthus. But the writer's object is by no means primarily polemical. He is, first of all, engaged in seeking to edify the Christian readers and to fortify them against the insidious inroads that institutional or conventional religion is perennially susceptible to. For we must not forget that this appeal comes, at the earliest, from the last part of the first century. Seventy years and more, it may be, have sped since the Christian Church began. The original impulse is far spent; the freedom and energy of the Spirit have given place to the lethargy of the letter; the Church has become an institution and is no longer an inspiration; many of its members are once-born, not twice-born; fellowship in the life eternal has to a large extent become a myth and consort with the world a matter of course; the criteria of Christianity are in confusion, and the standards of a secularism both selfish and sinful have usurped their throne.

What note is needed for such a crisis as this? If we listen to this author and correctly interpret his message, we see in it

The Criteria of Christian Fellowship

Does any one of us wish to know whether we are in the fellowship of the life eternal? This writer has

stated clearly the tests which we are to apply and in so doing find an answer to our question. Nine times during the course of his appeal he uses the expression, "Hereby we know," or one very similar. A rapid reading of these passages cannot fail to be of value. Having referred to the fact of fellowship as fundamental in the gospel of Christ, and having proved that the failure to attain and maintain this fellowship is due to the denial or the non-confession of our sinfulness (1: 1-2: 2), the writer then proceeds to give

The Tests of Fellowship

The first is stated in verse three of chapter two and is obedience. No obedience means no fellowship, but rather falsity. The second test is soon stated in 2: 5. It consists in imitation. If test number one refers to acts, this refers to character. This is expanded, therefore, at some length. *We must imitate Christ*. To have fellowship with him means to be followers of him. We must follow him in love (2: 7-11), in purity, in knowledge, in victory over evil, in filial consciousness of God, and in his complete triumph over every temptation the world has to offer (2: 12-17). This constitutes us sons of God, this imitation of Christ; so in chapter two, verse nineteen, the author takes opportunity to point out those who failed to stand the test. "They went out from us," but the true sons abide. Upon them descends the holy chrism even as the dove descended upon the Lord himself as he stood beneath the riven heavens upon the banks of Jordan. The positive aspects of sonship are presented in chapter three, verses one through five; the negative, in verses six through nine; and the contrast between the children of God and the children of the devil is drawn in verses ten through thirteen.

With the thirteenth verse of chapter three he begins to enumerate the

Tests of Sonship

They come in quick succession. They are: Sacrifice

(3: 16), assurance (3: 19), and the possession of the Spirit (3: 24).

So far these five have to do with the individual Christian in his relation to Christ as Lord and Example, to his fellow Christians, and to God. But he has other relations, and for the proper determination of these he must have tests. He must be able to detect false interpreters of Christianity. What is the touchstone he must apply? This is given in chapter four, verse two: sonship in terms of flesh and blood. This is the great commandment of the new dispensation, and there is no second like unto it. Then, too, there are relations sprung by the publication of the message on the part of the Christian. How is he to tell the character of his auditors? The answer is: "He that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. Hereby we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (4: 6).

But, after all, the orbit of a Christian's life has only two foci: God, his Father, and God's children, his brethren. How are we to know that we are "in focus" here? In chapter four, verse thirteen, the Spirit graciously gives us divine authority for the one; and in chapter five, verse two, our love for God and our performance of his commands give us practical demonstration of the other.

This ninefold test is further buttressed by the witness of God himself (5: 7-10). This is borne through the Spirit, based upon the Incarnate Son, and consists in the conscious possession of eternal life. Two summarizing paragraphs, the experiential knowledge of eternal life (5: 13-17) and the external demonstration of it (5: 18-20), conclude the letter. The last sentence (5: 21) is a bugle blast to call the Christian Church of all times away from the empty vanities of a merely institutionalized religiosity to the satisfying richness of a divinely revealed and humanly realized fellowship in the life eternal.

Thought Questions

1. Reflect upon the friendship of Peter and John, the writers of the remaining five of the so-called Catholic Epistles. Think of their differences of mental organization, temperament, character, and experience in the Christian life, and note how admirably they complemented each other in the work of the kingdom of God.

2. What are some of the critical problems presented by these five letters, and how do they affect your view of the authorship? In the face of these critical difficulties is the message of the letters weakened; or do you feel the spiritual power of it just the same?

3. What is the dominant note of First Peter, and what do we learn from it of Peter's experience? When Peter wrote the passage in 1 Peter 2: 1-10 was he thinking of Jesus's epithet "Rock" many years before applied to himself, and was he, perhaps, interpreting its meaning?

4. See whether you can relate every section of Peter's first letter to either the suffering saint or the suffering Saviour.

5. What is the heart of the message of Second Peter? How does it bear upon certain short-cut theories of Christian character?

6. How does Second Peter meet the sneer that the expected coming of the Lord had been a disappointment? How does his answer bear upon present-day vagaries of Adventism?

7. How does Third John throw light upon the life of the early Church, especially the prevailing way of propagating the faith?

8. Is Second John addressed to a Church or to an individual member of a Church; and in this letter do you find a message complementary to Third John?

9. Although classified with the Catholic Epistles, is First John properly speaking a letter? And, considering its tremendous importance in comparison with Second and Third John, would you not infer that the two latter had been preserved as appendices to the larger document?

10. Do the erroneous teachings combated in First John afford any clue to its date? If they do, how late in the history of the Christian Church would you place this homily?

11. How many of the "tests" proposed in First John can you give?

IX. TWO TRACTS FOR TIMES OF TRANSITION: HEBREWS AND REVELATION

Passages for Daily Readings

Sunday.—Christ the Son of God Greater Than Prophets and Angels. Hebrews 1: 1-14.

Monday.—Christ the Son of God Greater Than Moses, Greater Than Aaron. Hebrews 3: 1-6; 5: 1-10.

Tuesday.—The Final Priesthood and the Perfect Sacrifice. Hebrews 9: 23-10: 10-18.

Wednesday.—A Salutation and a Vision of the Glorified Christ. Revelation 1: 4-20.

Thursday.—From Jesus Ascended to the Churches on the Field of History. Revelation 2.

Friday.—Jesus's Messages to the Churches Continued. Revelation 3.

Saturday.—The Judgment of Corrupt and Godless Civilization. Revelation 19: 1-10. The New Kingdom of God. Revelation 21: 1-8.

Introduction

HAVING traversed the Pauline writings and what are called the Catholic Epistles, we are now ready to glance at the two remaining books of the epistolary section of our New Testament Scriptures. These are the Epistle to the Hebrews and the book of Revelation. It is well that we take these together; for, despite certain well-marked differences, these writings have at least one or two points of contact, the greatest one doubtless being that they may both be called Epistles of Exhortation and Consolation for the Church in times of great crises.

The Hebrews is by far the less intricate of the two, and hence we shall do well to consider it first. Our first paragraph will serve to review some principles found helpful in our previous study.

The moment we pick up any book of the Bible several questions at once clamor for answer. First of all, we wish to know *who* wrote it in order that we may

properly estimate its authority; secondly, we ask, "*To whom* was it directed?" in order that we may rightly appreciate the form of the writing and the force of the arguments employed. Again, we have a curiosity to know *why* this particular author addressed this particular Church or people in order that we may obtain a proper view of the occasion which prompted the writing. A fourth question we should like answered is, "*When* was the work written?" because the answer to this helps much in getting the historical situation and in explaining any references to contemporary events the writing may contain. Again, we wish to discover, if possible, *how* the author set about to achieve his end; and, finally, we particularly wish to know *what* he really said—in other words, we wish to find out the "teaching" the writer has embodied in his production in order that we may get illumination and inspiration for our own spiritual life.

With regard to some books in the Bible we can get satisfactory answers to all these questions, and these correct answers are what make those books live anew in our day; with regard to other books, however, we have to be content with fewer points of real knowledge. Preëminent among such books is

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

one of the most important, theologically, and precious, religiously, of all the books that enter into our canon, but at the same time a book which presents some of the most puzzling problems known to New Testament science. In fact, it seems to flash across the path of the Church like its own Melchizedek, and stand there sublimely alone, "without father or mother, without genealogy," but at the same time "having no end of life." For it is a fact that, despite our great ignorance of many points connected with this book, its insistent and consistent appeal to the Christian consciousness all through the centuries has been constantly heard, and this Epistle more than any other has left its mark upon

the formularies of the faith; it has had a great influence in shaping various theories of the atonement; it has always stood without a rival in the significance it attaches to the priestly office of our Lord; and no book in all the range of revelation gives us such a comprehensive conception of the divine-human person of the Saviour.

As this power of the book is a fact beyond dispute, we shall doubtless do well to begin with our *last* question and ask them all over in *reverse* order. Hence our first interrogation becomes:

*What Is the Teaching of This Marvelous
Manuscript?*

The limits of this study, of course, prohibit any detail; fortunately, it is not necessary. *This* writer knows what he wants to do; and if we are in search of his central doctrine, we find it given in the key verse to the Epistle (7: 19), where he describes Christianity as "a better hope through which we draw nigh to God." Hence the author's theme is the "Finality of Faith" as revealed in Christ. He enterprises a study in comparative religion and lays down as his conception of the absolute or final religion the guaranteeing of free and perfect access to God. If religion fails here, however imposing its ritual or logical its teaching, the failure is dismal. Judaism, the highest type of religion known hitherto, has failed (10: 1-4); Christianity has, in the author's opinion and experience, succeeded gloriously. God has come nigh to men in that he has partaken of flesh and blood in the person of the Son, and men may now come with boldness into his very presence with the assurance divinely inwrought that they will find grace to help in every time of need. With this as the central idea of the writing, we see at a glance

The Logic of the Method Employed

If Christianity is the final word of God to men, there must be a sense in which it contrasts with all antecedent

revelations of his will and purpose. There have been antecedent revelations, for our author is far from being a deist. Granted God's existence, his fundamental faith is: "God speaks." In this thought God is no mute mind wrapped forever in the gloom and isolation of its own infinite mystery; but God is a thinking, speaking, acting Person who has made all eternity thrill with his presence and all time vocal with his purpose. "By divers portions and in divers manners" has this antecedent revelation come. All created existences have from time to time become channels—prophets, angels, lawgivers, priests—these all in their several spheres have connected God with the world. Now, another bond has been disclosed, another Voice has joined in to consummate the chorus. He has spoken by his Son! The last word for which all these other words were preparatory has been uttered, for the Word himself has become incarnate.

It is on the basis of this supremacy of Christianity as the absolute religion and the preëminence of the Son as the Agent of redemption that the author institutes his remarkable

Series of Contrasts

between Christ and prophets, Christ and angels, Christ and Moses, and Christ and Aaron. Little stress is laid upon the first, as the writer contents himself with two words as giving the key to Christ's superiority over the channels of prophetic revelation. These words are "fragmentary" and "topical" (1:1)—that is, the message that came to men by prophets came bit by bit ("in many parts"), and also it came in different forms ("in many modes"). By implication the revelation brought by Christ is free from each of these limitations in that it is both *full* and *final*.

The contrast between Christ and angels is wrought out more fully, doubtless, because of the peculiar fascination angelology had for the readers. In their mind there was a temptation to make the angels rivals of Christ in redemption. Hence the writer shows the su-

premacY of Christ in the threefold contrast: Son and servants (1: 5, 6), King and subjects (1: 7-9), and Creator and creatures (1: 10-13). He draws the conclusion from all this that the angelic function is to *serve*, not to *save*. Angels, therefore, are not *sources*, but *instruments*; they are not to be *worshipped*, but to be *workers* in the interest of those who are heirs of salvation (1: 14).

Moses also, the paragon of revelation hitherto, occupies a lower place than Christ. But this writer knows how to show the inferiority of the great lawgiver without discrediting him. To do this would have been a serious defect in judgment. Therefore he clearly maintains a high regard for this supreme character in Jewish history, while at the same time he demonstrates his subordinate rank when he is contrasted with Christ. There is one point of similarity—both were *faithful*. But at once the point of departure is given: Moses was a *servant in God's house*; Christ is a *Son in his own* (3)!

The fourth and final contrast is that instituted between

Christ and Aaron

This is drawn out at much length; not, to be sure, because the author of Hebrews had a proportionately greater regard for the high priest than for his brother the lawgiver, but because the people who were to read his message *did* have. The writer's point is perfectly clear. He declares with almost brutal bluntness: "It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin." He knows both by experience and observation the impotence of the whole ritualistic system. In itself it is nothing; it is purely pedagogical; it serves for illustration and education, but it is incapable of bringing salvation. It is beautiful and inspiring to look upon, but it has no power to cleanse the conscience (9: 9, 10).

Aaron, its head, is a "sacerdotal slave," drudging

through a series of perfunctory details, himself one of a sinful series who must offer up daily sacrifice for himself as well as for the people. This is the writer's view; with the readers it is far different. Aaron and what he stands for evidently filled nearly their whole horizon. The glamour of that elaborate ritual held them with its fascinating spell. The external trappings of priestly paraphernalia meant more to them than the beauty of a heart cleansed from sin. Hence the delicate task of their teacher. He must contrast and yet not asperse; he must show Christ superior and yet not wound the sensibilities of those he seeks to save. And so he estimates at its highest worth the whole Aaronic dispensation and, using it as a background, throws into even clearer light the transcendently final offering of the one great High Priest, who was made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life (7: 16; 9: 23-28).

If our answers to the "what" and the "how" of this Epistle are correct, they in some measure suggest the time

When It Was Written

for our author is no archæological expert airing his knowledge of antiquity, but an open-eyed observer of contemporary conditions. This means that the writing antedates the fall of Jerusalem; after this time such a production would be the *ne plus ultra* of impertinent pedantry. Again, the historical note in 13: 23, referring to Timothy's release, while not absolutely decisive, looks to an early date; and we are disposed to decide that the letter was written at some time between the death of Paul and the fall of Jerusalem—that is, in the last pentad of the seventh decade of the first century, just before the beginning of that awful Jewish war the outcome of which was a national calamity of hitherto unprecedented proportions.

The "Why" of the Writing

is sufficiently disclosed from time to time by the author himself in the numerous exhortations which intersperse the argumentative sections and constitute the closing sections. Indeed, he himself authorizes us in stating that the Epistle as a whole is a hortatory discourse (13: 22). This implies that his readers are in danger at some point in their Christian life; and when we couple such passages as 2: 3, 4: 1, 5: 4-8, and 10: 26-39, which contain such strong warnings against falling away, with the great roll call of the eleventh chapter, where every incentive is urged to inspire them to be faithful even unto death, we can hardly miss the fact when we aver that these people were under strong temptation to give up Christianity and revert to a former religious status. This must have been Judaism; and so the situation is that these Christian Jews, under the lure of the Levitical dispensation as contrasted with the simplicity and isolation of the Christian profession, were under a great strain to go back to their former faith. The author knows that this is doomed; already Jerusalem is marked for destruction; they must not cling to a phantom. He therefore shows them the permanent and abiding.

Who Is the Writer

that flings himself into the breach and seeks to save these people from the temptation that threatens to destroy their faith? Here the answers have been many. Paul, Barnabas, Luke, Clement of Rome, and others have been urged as candidates for the high honor of fathering this truly noble production. Some critics have found traces of double authorship, even to the detection of a *feminine* touch, and have suggested as colaborers those true Christian yokefellows Aquila and Priscilla. These are all guesses more or less desperate. Probably the happiest guess so far is that revived by Luther, who hit upon Apollos. This solution has found many

sponsors in modern times, though it is based largely on our ignorance. Perhaps if our information were fuller we should not accord him the honor. But as it happens, our sole description of him is that he "was an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures"; and we know that the writer of the Hebrews was eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures, therefore we conclude that Apollos is the author. Such is the limping logic of Luther and his satellites on this point. Such a conclusion is not disprovable, but it is not therefore final. In fact, the only thing *demonstrably certain* with regard to the authorship of this majestic message is that Paul was *not* its author. With regard, however, to anything positive, we must maintain the modest attitude of Origen, who, while he had his opinion, was satisfied to say: "Who wrote the Epistle God alone certainly knows."

Is there not a sublime logic in our lack of knowledge on this point? This writing stands for the supreme significance of the Saviour. Why should the personality of the author, however great, obtrude itself? It stands for the final message of the Son; why exalt the human medium? It stands for the absolute religion; why impoverish this by insistence on the individual idiosyncrasy of the author? Such questions he himself asked and answered by the complete obliteration of himself. In spirit he would have all men hear the voice that broke the stillness of the transfiguration scene: "This is my beloved Son: hear him."

And so the New Testament, like the Old Testament, has its "great unknown." This author of apostolic days, like his counterpart, the Prophet of the Exile, transmits to us with a purity of diction, a stateliness of style, a fervor of eloquence, and a majesty of thought well-nigh unparalleled in the pages of inspiration, not his name to satisfy our curiosity, but his *message* to fortify our *faith*.

THE REVELATION

From the Epistle to the Hebrews, which registers the victory of Christianity as a *final religion* in competition with the highest religion hitherto known, Judaism, we turn now to the Apocalypse, or Revelation, which registers the victory of the Christian spirit as a final form of civilization over all forms of civilization, even the highest civilization hitherto known—the Græco-Roman. The range of the book is therefore much wider and its currents manifold and frequently confusing. The type of literature presented is alike unique; though as it contains real epistolary elements and is in its entirety designed to be read in certain definite churches, we are justified in closing our study of the Letters of the New Testament by a brief reference to this remarkable production. Let us group our study around three or four points.

The kind of literature represented in the book under consideration is that known as apocalyptic. The name of the book in Greek is *Apocalypse*, which has its Latin equivalent in *Revelation*. This type of literature is found elsewhere in our Bible. There are, for example, in the Old Testament apocalyptic elements in Joel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah; in the New Testament we have illustrations in the Synoptic Gospels and in Second Thessalonians. But *the outstanding* apocalyptic writings of our Bible are for the Old Testament the book of Daniel and for the New the book of Revelation; and, naturally enough, *both* seem to emanate from periods near the close of each section of the canonical writings—the one from the period of the horrible abominations of Antiochus Epiphanes, the other from the bloody persecution of the age of Domitian. It is this suggestion that gives us the explanation of the rise of this type of literature. Apocalypses are the children of stress and storm, the offspring of periods of desperate conditions, rallying

cries sent forth to hearten combatants just on the eve of rout and ruin. Hence they usually come in the name of a great leader; and in times when the forces of earth and hell join hard against the ranks of the righteous and threaten to sweep them from the field in utter defeat, one of the undaunted souls betakes himself to some point of vantage where he can get above the dust and confusion of present conflict, for a time holds high converse with the heroes of the past, with prescient eye looks beyond the present distress and in the clear light of God's eternal day reads the outcome of the age-long struggle of which the present battle is but an incident, and then, with the glow of a divine optimism shining in his face and the clarion note of victory ringing on his tongue, comes down from his peak of privilege to nerve the hand and inspire the heart of his fellows and lead them on to triumph. It is not strange, then, that the period between 165 B.C. and 100 A.D. should be fairly full of such writings, for surely the external conditions were such as to call loudly for them. Hence we find that during these years, first, Jews and, later, Jewish Christians fed their hopes and fired their hearts by contact with the great spirits of antiquity who spoke to them in such wonderful personages as Enoch, the seventh from Adam, Moses, Baruch, the friend of Jeremiah, and Esdras. Other writings of this type are the "Psalms of Solomon," which Pompey's invasion of Palestine called forth, the "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," and the "Sibylline Oracles," this last being in all probability the most valuable in elucidating the apocalypse of John.

This brings us to consider next the question whether apocalypticism is not a merely accidental element in the Christian writings due to their connection with Judaism and Judaistic forms of expression. We can at least say this much: that if there is any Christian element it is to be got by passing by as mere technical drapery all the phantasmagoria of apocalyptic phraseology and

seeking to define as clearly as we may the underlying principle involved. For surely to interpret such a book as the one that closes our canon in any strictly literal sense is not only unscientific, but highly unchristian. To put the case succinctly: Christianity is the revelation of a spirit that runs counter to the selfishness and sin of this world; there ensues necessarily a conflict bitter and prolonged; the outcome of this conflict, we cannot doubt, is victory for God and the right; the Christian of the first century read this victory in terms of bloody destruction of the world; this was the only way he could make his message grip the minds and stir the hearts of his hearers. But has not the all-conquering Spirit of Christ conquered even this form of conquest? Does not our reading of the history of God's kingdom on earth as an ever-developing principle of life permeating all phases of man's manifold relations rob us to some extent of the dramatic vividness which the cataclysmic interpretation of Oriental thinking supplied? Be this as it may, eliminate all the technical extravaganza seemingly so necessary to the writer's and reader's mind—the horses of all colors, earthquakes and eclipses, trumpet blasts on land and sea, falling stars and swarms of locusts, dragons with seven heads and ten horns, angels reaping the earth, glassy seas mingled with fire, bowls of wrath, falling Babylons, and descending cities of God—eliminate all these by reason of their being a tongue “not understood of” us modern Occidental folk, and still there stands before us in simple yet majestic outline the great message of the book.

The all-conquering Spirit of Christ. This is a theme not to be argued, but to be described; hence the medium of revelation is *vision*. A series of scenes is given, and the *locus* and *dramatis personæ* are continually shifting—now Patmos, now heaven, now land, now sea, now the abyss, now the Euphrates, now Rome, now Jerusalem above, now hell with all its horrors, now the resplendent glories of a redeemed and purified earth. In all these places Christ is Master supreme; all persons and crea-

tures and things yield him full and final obeisance. This is the one great principle the writer wishes to get into the hearts of his readers. It is the transmission to the collective Church all through the ages of the thrilling inspiration that dispelled once for all the terror of the few disciples in the upper room when Jesus breathed into their quaking hearts the fortifying consolation: "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

How this purpose is carried out is shown by a general glance at the plan of the book. After a prologue consisting of an expanded superscription (1: 1-3) and a salutation which for comprehensiveness and grandeur is unsurpassed (1: 4-8), the writer details what to him is the most important feature of his whole experience. This is his wonderfully inspiring

Vision of the Christ

He was himself in need of just such help as could come only from an all-conquering One; for was he not a companion in tribulation of those Asian Christians whom he sought to hearten? Was he not an exile, banished by the brutal cruelty of worldly pride and insolence? It was on a Sunday, and as the ecstasy seized him he heard a voice like the voice of a trumpet. But what he saw was far more wonderful; he saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of these "one like unto the Son of man," and yet how unlike! Language limps and the most fantastic figures fail in their attempt to indicate the glory of this sight. The eyes like a flame of fire, the feet like burnished brass, the voice like the voice of many waters, the right hand that grasped the seven stars, the two-edged sword that shot forth from his mouth, the countenance that shone like the sun in his splendor—all this was too much for him that had leaned upon the breast of the Master. Such power, such glory he had never connected with even the Stillor of the storm or the Raiser of the dead! In simple but sublime eloquence this writer, who had looked deepest into the heart

of Jesus during the days of his flesh and had walked with him unabashed, even requesting a place at his right hand, declares: "When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a corpse." Nor was there any point of contact till that same right hand that grasped the seven stars, the hand that had waved the winds to rest in the good old Galilean days, the hand that had broken the bread and touched the leper back to health—this hand fell in gracious benediction on the head of the awe-stricken seer, and into his ears there flowed the sweet music of the Master's gentle "Fear not." Then came the revelation of his primacy as the ever-living One, and from the great heights of this vision of the ascended Lord there comes into view

The Vision of Weak and Wicked Churches

The two are correlates. How far the Church at times is from her Lord, yet how close in love and sympathy and discipline he is to her despite her failures and his grandeur! These Churches are in great heathen centers; sin is rampant; each in turn is addressed in tones of rebuke or encouragement as the case demands; and so far as these particular Churches and their several needs were concerned, the letter might have ended here. But a great principle is embodied in their experiences; they are not simply themselves; they embody an age-long parable. The conflict of the ages is manifesting itself for the time in their case; they are part and parcel of the universal travail. Hence the writer would, on the authority of their risen Lord, lift them out of their provincialism and selfish isolation and, raising them to the plane of the heavenly places by a series of shifting scenes—now in time, now in eternity, now on earth, now in heaven—would seek to imbue them with a sense of the transcendent glory of their calling and the ultimate victory of their cause in order that he might give them somewhat of the strength of the all-conquering Christ.

It is logical, therefore, that the next scene should be set amid the

Enduring Splendors of Heaven Itself

Here (4 and 5) a glimpse is given of the glory of the Creator and the glory of the Redeemer. The eternal throng in all nature are depicted as rendering God homage, the twenty-four elders joining in with the song of creation's story. But

“’Twas great to speak a world from naught,
’Twas greater to redeem”;

and so we find the second phase of this vision which heralds the glory of the Redeemer closing with a *new song* in which the story of redemption is sung, and then the voices of angels mingle with those of the beasts and of the elders and every creation which is in the heaven and upon the earth and under the earth and upon the sea to render “blessing, and honor, and glory, and might to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb.”

These are the forces on the side of righteousness. What have they already accomplished? This is shown in two phases: The vision of the Redeemed, first, in Israel (7: 1-8); and, secondly, among all nations (7: 8-17). Next in order comes

The Vision of the Forces of Evil and Their Defeat in Heaven (12-14)

This is wrought out at great length, and some sections (notably the twelfth chapter) are undeniably Jewish to the core; the culminating phase of this division, however, the vision of the Son of Man in power (14: 14-20), has many elements in common with the Synoptic Gospels.

From this scene of heavenly power the flight is swift and sure to the catastrophe this drama is tending toward. The center of power on earth is Rome. If it can be overthrown, the age-long oppressor of God's people, both Jews and Christians will have great ground for rejoicing. She has polluted the holy place and defiled

the earth, blasphemed God and maltreated men; her existence challenges the righteousness of the Ruler of the universe; she is therefore doomed; and while men of earth bewail her loss, heaven joins in hallelujahs, for the fall of the harlot city is the signal for

The Marriage of the Lamb

Earth being cleansed from the foul pollution of the imperial cult, the Church of Christ is ready to become his bride. He returns, therefore, in triumph and registers his might in the destruction of the kings of earth, the hurling of the beasts into the lake of fire, the binding of Satan for a thousand years, and the inauguration of the millennial reign (19: 11-20: 6).

Two brief paragraphs are taken up in describing the final conflict and judgment (20: 7-15), and then the final vision of

The New Jerusalem

is disclosed.

Here we have the picture of a perfect social order, a new heaven and a new earth; no tears, no death, no mourning, no pain; all things new; no fearful ones, no unbelievers, no murderers, no fornicators, no idolaters, no liars—all these are cast out forever. Then comes a final glimpse of the glorious Bride. The Churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, of Asia and the world, purged of all impurities, without stain or wrinkle, enter in to sit down at the marriage of the Lamb.

No wonder after such a vision of the all-conquering Spirit of Christ the writer, coming back to earth and the hard and bitter realities of the cruel Græco-Roman world, closes his wonderful book with representing the Spirit, the Church on earth, and all who hear as uniting in the earnest prayer, "Come, come, come"; nor does he drop his pen before he has heard the consoling word of Christ himself: "Yea, I am coming quickly." And so this book of blood and war, of things grotesque at times and all the while mysterious; this book where

ofttimes confusion seems even worse confounded, works its way to final victory and in its last breath voices in calm courage its undying faith in Him who is faithful and true: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Strangely tragic test of Christian faith! *He did not come*, as this author so devoutly wished and thought he would. His ways are not the ways of Jewish apocalypics, even when buttressed by the name and fame of the disciple whom Jesus loved. As he said to him once in the days of his flesh, so since that day he has said to him once again: "Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of." But he *is* coming all the while, though not perhaps in the way our feeble faith and half-blinded eyes are picturing. In the breaking of the light in heathen minds, in the purified Christian conscience, in the ever-developing spirit of brotherhood, in the slow but sure processes of the spiritual emancipation of the race, Christ is coming, a new heaven and a new earth are being born, the temple of God is more and more dwelling among men, and the ever-thrilling clarion call of our common humanity as it toils and fights and suffers up the ragged and rugged slopes of progress is:

"On from the bounds of the waste,
On to the city of God!"

Thought Questions

1. Widely dissimilar as they are in many respects, what characteristic in common have Hebrews and Revelation?

2. In what estimation has Hebrews always been held, and what are the reasons for this appraisalment of a book of origin so uncertain?

3. What is the key verse, and what is the central doctrine of Hebrews?

4. What are the several contrasted modes of revelation of which the writer of Hebrews speaks, and why is this last the final and full one?

5. What hint of the date of the writing of Hebrews is given by the last great contrast—that between the priesthood and ritual of Aaron and the priesthood and institution of Christ? And how is this hint strengthened

by the one item of personal biography in the writing (13: 23)?

6. What is the purpose of the writing of Hebrews, and for whom is it especially designed? Can you picture a condition that would have made this writing supremely timely?

7. Do you perceive a fitness in the anonymity of this most eloquent of the New Testament writings?

8. With what Old Testament writing is the Revelation classed? What in common were the circumstances of the writing of these two wonderful yet mysterious books? Were there apocalyptic writings circulating in the New Testament times that are not in the Canon of Scripture?

9. What is the great central theme of the Revelation that shines through the drama and the symbols? (*Ecce venit!*)

10. Take the vision of the Christ (1: 9-20) and try to interpret its features literally: see how absolutely necessary it is that we bear in mind that we are dealing in symbols, not definite objects.

11. Try to recollect the essential thing about each of the subsequent visions (the Church, 2-3; the Heaven, 4-5; the Defeat of the Forces of Evil in Heaven, 12-14; the Marriage of the Lamb, 19: 11-20: 6; the New Jerusalem, 21: 1-22: 5) and from your knowledge of the Old Testament try to interpret the apocalyptic symbols.

12. Would it not plunge us into the most hideous materialism, such as taught by Mormonism and Russellism, if we were to take these symbols at their literal meaning?

13. Does this last consideration throw any light upon the teaching concerning our Lord's second coming?

X. THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL; OR, THE LIFE AND WORK OF CHRIST IN THE FLESH

Passages for Daily Readings

Sunday.—The Beginning of the Good Tidings. Mark 1: 1-39.

Monday.—An Unparalleled Collection of Teachings. Matthew 5: 1-20; 7: 24-28.

Tuesday.—A Gospel of Parables. Matthew 13: 1-23, etc.

Wednesday.—Human Interest. Luke 15: 1-31.

Thursday.—A Precious Narrative of Easter Even. Luke 24: 13-36.

Friday.—The Word Becoming Manifest. John 1: 1-18.

Saturday.—The Manifestation Complete. John 17: 1-26.

Introduction

HAVING compassed very cursorily the epistolary section of our New Testament and seen the occasion and general purpose of the twenty-two books of letters, it now devolves upon us to glance at what, for the lack of a better term, we usually call the historical books. These are five in number, made up of the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—and the Acts. For our present study we shall deal with the fourfold gospel story.

The field is so large and these books are so important that a whole study could profitably be devoted to each; but our time and space are so limited that we shall have to forego the discussion of many phases of our theme and pin our attention to some three or four of the fundamental principles underlying the whole phenomenon of gospel composition as we have it presented in our New Testament scriptures.

Let us take up in order, then, the following topics: The Meaning of the Word "Gospel" as Here Applied, The Function of a Gospel, The Relation of Our Four

Gospels to Each Other, and Some Characterizations and Analyses.

The Term "Gospel"

In the first place, we are met by the outstanding fact that the New Testament itself knows no such thing as a Gospel in the sense that we apply it in our present discussion. In the life of the early apostolic Church the gospel is one thing; in the literature of the subapostolic age it is an entirely different thing. In the Epistles of Paul, for example, the word "gospel" connotes the revelation of God's love and mercy demonstrated to men in the death and resurrection of his Son. The epitome of this message of redemption is given by him in the first paragraph of the fifteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, and with him agree all the writers of the New Testament who broach the question. For them, one and all, the gospel is the good news of salvation achieved by Christ and attested by his own resurrection, ascension, session, and the descent of the Holy Spirit. They know nothing of such a term used to describe the earthly life of Jesus. And yet it is perfectly natural that such a use would arise. The apostolic gospel consisted fundamentally of the joyful proclamation: "The Lord has risen, and hath appeared." Apart from this underlying conviction early Christianity has no explanation, has not even any existence. New Testament religion is grounded in the life of a risen Lord, not founded on the teachings of a departed and deluded religious devotee. And yet we can readily see how this fundamental apostolic definition of the word "gospel" would inevitably expand; and it is in the study of this expansion that we come to the clearest conception of the growth of our gospel literature. For, granting that the initial proclamation of apostolic preaching was the resurrection, this would necessarily raise the question of the death of Jesus; and this, in turn, would spring the whole question of Passion Week. We may confidently affirm that the first content of apos-

tolie deliverance was occupied with the announcement and explication of what Jesus had experienced and explained during the *last week* of his public ministry, supplemented by the revelations of the subsequent forty days. This explains a palpable phenomenon of our fourfold gospel story—namely, the multiplicity of detail, the abundance of material, and, for the most part, the harmony that characterizes the passion week story as detailed by each. It also proves beyond the shadow of a doubt where the early Church placed the emphasis—namely, that the early Christian consciousness started with the conviction of the risen Lord and *worked backward* through the tragedy of his death and trial into his public ministry and, finally, into the incidents connected with his childhood and infancy. In other words, their method of approach was exactly the opposite of ours. This must be borne in mind if we are to be fair to them and to ourselves. As has been truly said, it was the life *in* Christ that made the early Church interested in the life *of* Christ. Hence we are prepared for the fact that what we call Gospels are by no means biographies of Jesus in our modern understanding of the term. There are too many leaps of time and yawning hiatuses of incident to allow them this title unqualified. The one reason that we have never had an entirely satisfactory life of Jesus is that the materials for the construction of such a life are wanting and will be forever wanting, because from the standpoint of early Christianity *this* was not essential; for from their point of view salvation is not secured by knowing the earthly life of Jesus or following his earthly teaching, but by becoming partakers of the life and love of God, which the death and resurrection of Jesus overwhelmingly demonstrated and which the coming of his Spirit made consciously their own.

This brings us, in the second place, to give brief mention to

The Function of a Gospel

From what has been said above it follows that this function is not primarily historical, but rather didactic and interpretative. Not the bare facts, but the forces and principles involved in the earthly life of our Lord, were from the early Church's view of the greatest importance. Hence the presence in the Gospel narratives, even the most straightforward, of what is usually called a *tendency* element—that is, the facts are so selected and reported as to produce certain effects upon the readers or hearers. For the primary function of a Gospel is to feed the faith and stimulate the life of believers. The Epistles are largely evangelical and controversial. They appeal to the unconverted and the gainsayers, while not overlooking, of course, the instruction of the Church in the constructive principles of Christian character. The Gospels, on the other hand, are mainly educational and seek to acquaint the believers with the ever-developing fund of incident both of *word* and *work* that characterized the earthly life of their risen Lord. This record naturally falls into two grand hemispheres, both together making up the total sphere of apostolic consciousness on the matter of the revelation that was in Christ. For these apostles knew him first of all in the days of his flesh, and then they knew him in the power and presence of the Spirit. The first continent of their contact with him is explored for us in the pages of the fourfold gospel story. The second is that opened up by the book called by later ages the Acts of the Apostles, but regarded by the man that penned its thrilling paragraphs as simply the *continuation* of what Jesus *began* to do and to teach up to the time of his ascension (Acts 1:2). In other words, the life and work of Jesus in the days of his flesh have as their inevitable complement and necessary sequel the life and work of Jesus in the full tide of his spiritual presence. We shall reserve this subject for our concluding study, giving our attention now to the life and work of Jesus

in the days of his flesh as represented to us in the four-fold gospel story which has come down to us under that noble quarternion, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The Relation of the Four Gospels to Each Other

To begin with, the relations subsisting between these four representations of the life and work of our Lord constitute a unique phenomenon in literature. In the first place, we have the obvious differences between the Johannine account and that of the other three. Into the vexed question of this relationship we cannot go now. Sufficient it is to recognize broadly the difference in the time, place, manner, matter, and general attitude of our Lord's ministry as set forth in our fourth Gospel from what we have in the synoptics; sufficient also to recall that whether *we* in our day can reconcile these differences or not, the *early Church did*, for the men of that day had no difficulty in incorporating into their comprehensive interpretation of Christ and his ministry such apparently divergent data. Interesting as this phase of the subject is, we cannot go further; but what we have said and what any one can see by reading the Gospels simply corroborates the statement of the writers themselves that they do not aim at a complete arrangement of the facts, that their method is selective, and that their purpose is educative and religious, not primarily historical and scientific.

A second phase of this relationship we can only glance at, and that is the interrelationship of the synoptics—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—themselves. This is so far one of the standing puzzles of the literary criticism of the New Testament. "So alike," we exclaim as we read them in certain sections, "as to be evidently transcripts of each other or of a common archetype!" "So unlike," we avow as we scan other portions, "as evidently to demonstrate absolutely divergent sources!" And our conceptions of how the conundrum is to be solved are not clarified much by the presence of a more or less common body of material that bears evident trace

of conscious deviation from what the compiler had before him! Into the intricacies of these interrelations only expert explorers dare enter. The tyro would soon be hopelessly lost in the inextricable maze of correspondences, contradictions, variations, duplications, substitutions, and transmutations any thoroughgoing grappling of the synoptic problem involves.

Fortunately we need not plunge into the wilderness itself; we can stand on its edge and see one or two general principles quite clearly. One of these is that our present second Gospel (Mark) is by all odds *the oldest form in which the earthly life of our Lord has been transmitted to us*. This is logical from the point previously stated, that the incidents centering about the week of passion constituted the staple of early apostolic preaching.

We can hardly believe that much time would elapse before the question would be sprung as to what was the reason for the action of the authorities in putting Jesus to trial and subsequently to death. The answer would be that it was the outcome of a public ministry on his part that caught the eye and ear of the people and so led to the endangering of the influence of the religious and political leaders of the day. So that it is hardly conceivable that any effort to explain at all the *last week of Jesus's life* would stop short of the *terminus a quo* supplied by the inauguration of the public ministry. Now, this is just what Mark's Gospel does. It seizes as the "beginning of the Gospel" the inauguration of the life work of Jesus by his baptism at the hands of John, the prophet of the desert, and with a master hand gives in succession a series of pen sketches—a sort of moving picture style—which for vividness and dramatic realism have scarcely any parallel in literature, the salient incidents and deeds in the life of Jesus that by reason of their inherent momentum hurl him forward to the catastrophe of Calvary and the glory of the Easter morn.

A second generally accepted result of the investiga-

tion of the relation of our first three Gospels is the fact that there is discoverable the presence of a document underlying Matthew and Luke which was used by these Gospels along with the data supplied by Mark's Gospel. This document, for the most part, was made up of the sayings of Jesus, and by various scholars has been more or less reproduced from the phenomena presented. This document is usually referred to as Q, a symbolical abbreviation for the German word *Quelle*, which means "sources." This, too, is just what we should expect. For it is in the highest degree probable that going along with a tradition that would detail the *works* of Jesus there should be one that would preserve more or less of his *words*; and it is the later compilation and codification of these traditions that constitutes the glory of the evangelistic authors as well as explains the presence of their puzzling problem. Whether it contains the potencies of a solution, however, we must wait for future investigators to assert. Certainly for the present it is true to say that, so far as the phenomena are presented, the few pages of the Synoptic Gospels constitute a literary problem that has baffled and is baffling the most learned ingenious devices of critical acumen. After all, the supreme reason may possibly be that herein is a sort of overruling providence to call to our minds indirectly at least the great truth for which Christianity primarily stands: "The letter killeth; it is the Spirit that makes alive."

So we may say that while the *gospel* made the Church, the Church made the *Gospels*. And the ever-enlarging scope of gospel tradition is simply the effort of the Church to so present the life and work of Jesus as to answer the demands of her ever-enlarging area of occupation. So the Gospels are monuments to the missionary zeal and energy of the early Church—not simply in a geographical, but in a *social* and *philosophical* sense as well. The command "Go ye into every world" was interpreted by apostolic genius not only horizontally, but also perpendicularly; not only physical territory,

but metaphysical too was the proper domain on which to wage a conquest for Christ. Hence we see that while Mark's Gospel is directed to the Church gathered from the Roman world, it has in it that principle in the life of Jesus which would appeal most persuasively to the Roman type of mind—namely, the *dynamic* element. Jesus is set forth as a doer of deeds, chiefly those deeds that are especially compelling in arresting the crass materialism of Roman thought and challenging it to the contemplation of a world of spiritual forces which the vulgar epicurean philosophy of the hour had so sadly and completely obscured. Again, while we may fairly accord truth to the tradition that Matthew is a Gospel called forth by the exigencies of the success of early Christianity among the Jews, still we must not think that this ends the matter. We may confidently assert that there are principles in this presentation of the life and work of Jesus that have as their purpose to show how it is possible for one to graduate out of the school of Moses into the school of Christ. Prominently in this Gospel is the Christian principle presented as not inimical to but complementary of Judaism. In its pages Jesus comes not to destroy, but to fulfill; his revelation is not a rival, but rather the natural fruitage of the Jewish Messianic hope in its true and spiritual significance. Hence Jesus is a Son of Abraham; he is born King of the Jews. The Old Testament is drawn on for as much as twice the amount found in Mark or Luke, and in its concluding chapters Jesus enters the capital city as a King and is put to death by reason of his claim to royal prerogatives.

In the third place, Luke's Gospel, while called forth by the exigencies of successful missionary propaganda in the Græco-Roman world, since its author is a *physician*—one who runs the entire gamut of the social scale in his contact with humanity—and a companion of Paul, the herald of a universal gospel, it was impossible for such a writer in his handling of what came to him through the ordinary channels of historical investiga-

tion (see the illuminating confessions of the *why*, the *how*, and the *what* of the writing in Luke 1: 1-4) not to discover principles overlooked by various others whose versions palpably did not entirely suit the knowledge he had, else he would simply have sent what he had gathered to Theophilus, and the world would have been robbed of "the most beautiful book in all literature." How natural that a physician should have given us this most humanitarian interpretation of the life and work of Jesus! How quick his eye to detect and his hand to depict the hygienic influence of this great Person as he walks in and out among men and women of the most abandoned type—publicans, sinners, harlots—and leaves constantly the aroma of virtue and the saving strength of incarnate goodness to bless and purify with the glad stream of the water of life earth's most stagnant and putrid pools! What from all this is the inevitable deduction from the phenomena of Gospel construction? Nothing but the fundamental fact that faces us on every page of the epistolary portion of our New Testament—namely, that Christ is *all-efficient* and *all-sufficient*. When we come to the fourth Gospel, this principle reaches its climax so far as utterance in human language can be given to it. Doubtless one of the very latest proclamations of the apostolic Church, it has a full half or three-quarters of a century of conquest to look back upon. And though it has to face one of the most insidious and subtle sets of falsities the truth has ever met, as it combats the heresies incident to the Church's occupation of Asia Minor, it advances without a tremor, and in the interpretation it gives of the life and work of Jesus upon earth it shows him clearly as Conqueror in the realm of self, of sin, of the world, and of death; and therefore the author is able to connect the Christian principle vitally with the philosophic outlook of the time and to point the wandering minds of men to Him who is the Truth, the Life, and the Way to God.

From this general characterization we now turn to

our final task of setting forth brief analyses of the four Gospels.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

We shall begin with the earliest and shortest, that which has come down to us associated with the name of Mark. This Mark is, of course, John Mark, associated in the Acts with Paul and Barnabas in their early missionary operations. Later he seems to have attached himself to Peter, and it is in connection with this latter apostle that the tradition of the early ages preserves for us a most interesting bit of information. For Papias, Irenæus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Jerome all agree, at least in part, in ascribing this Gospel to Mark, influenced more or less by Peter. Papias (who, by the way, is the original Mrs. Grundy in all this matter of Gospel gossip) has this to say on the authority of one he calls "the elder": "Mark, having become Peter's interpreter, wrote down accurately what things he remembered (not, however, in order) of what had been spoken or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord, nor did he follow him." Nothing that later research has discovered has been able to shake off the impression of the early tradition that in some way or other the hand and the eye and the ear of Peter have to be reckoned with when we are reading the Gospel according to Mark. In fact, to get the best outline for our second Gospel we need only to refer to one of Peter's speeches (Acts 10: 38), for here we have Mark in epitome. And to see the full significance of some of its salient sections we have to picture ourselves looking over Peter's shoulders and through Peter's eyes.

Again, the second Gospel is just such a representation of the life and work of Jesus as would emanate from such a type of mind as that of Simon Peter. It is vivid, thoroughly objective, rapid in its movement, and leaves one always with an appetite for *something more* of the marvelous life it has so strikingly portrayed. Even the

abrupt break-off at the close (16: 8), leaving us "in the air," is thoroughly in keeping with many a Petrine performance. This is not to say, however, that Mark is only a phonograph mechanically reproducing what was dictated. On the contrary, what order is in this writing—and there is a good deal, both logical and chronological, despite the harsh verdict of Papias—is, we ween, due to Mark himself. All the tradition affirms that we are interested in maintaining is that the Gospel as we have it was written by Mark, based upon the reminiscences delivered by Peter. This in itself is sufficient and is another illustration of the primacy of the fisherman-apostle. Wonderful fulfillment of the word of Jesus, "*Thou* hast the keys"—the key that opened the door to the Christian community on the day of Pentecost, the key that opened the door to the Gentile world in the conversion of Cornelius, and *now* the key that opened the door to the priceless treasures wrapped up in the words and works of Jesus!

The construction of Mark's Gospel is very simple. A brief introduction of thirteen verses sets graphically before the reader the threefold preparation of Jesus for his public ministry. This preparation is *national* (the ministry of John the Baptist), *official* (the baptism of Jesus), and *personal* (the temptation). The narrative portion of the Gospel is devoted to a rapid analysis of Jesus's threefold field of operation: the Galilean ministry, the Perean, and the Judean. The description of the Galilean ministry, which is by far the larger section, begins at chapter one, verse fourteen, and continues through the ninth chapter. This period of two or more years is again distributed into two sections: the Eastern Galilean ministry, centering around Capernaum (1: 14-7: 23), and the northern circuit, round about Tyre and Sidon (7: 24-9: 50). The Perean ministry is simply a narrow line connecting the two broad areas of Galilean and Judean activity; for Mark is satisfied to pass over in a score and a half verses what Matthew doubles in volume and Luke expands a dozenfold (Mark 10: 1-31).

It is the Judean ministry that is important, however, both to Peter and to Mark, who in the early days of the Church's life lived in Jerusalem (Acts 12: 12). Here the incidents are detailed day by day; and though the time is but a few days, over one-third of the space of the whole writing is devoted to this ministry. And when we come to Passion Week itself we find that in this shortest Gospel, while the author has only twenty-two pages for the two years or more of the Galilean ministry, he has *fourteen* pages for the incidents of the last week. This is a disproportion of something like seventy to one and shows clearly where the center of gravity of the gospel story lies so far as the instinct of the early Church is concerned. It also testifies to the validity of our contention that in the construction of its evangelistic traditions the apostolic age began at the open grave and *worked backward*. The first cycle of this working backward is represented by the Marcan cycle and stopped with the beginning of the public ministry.

THE GOSPELS ACCORDING TO MATTHEW AND LUKE

But the logic of this initial procedure would inevitably lead to the effort when occasion arose to penetrate beyond and back of the public ministry and enter the private life of preparation and even peer with holy reverence into the sacred scenes of childhood and infancy itself. This necessity arose in the second generation of the Church's life, when children were the best heritage of Christian believers, and to the presence of these we owe those efforts which were finally crowned with success in gathering and crystallizing such beautifully expressed and such heart-thrilling traditions as we read in the introductory chapters of our first and third Gospels. Aside from the presence of these birth and childhood traditions, the Matthean and Lucan memoirs do not swerve from the line of procedure laid down by the Marcan cycle. The largest addition is in the matter of discourses and the fuller details embodied in the Perean history. This discourse material is largely what

Matthew and Luke got from Q, and their personal contribution is seen largely in the matter of arrangement. Here Luke would seem to be truer to the real facts in the case not only from his avowed purpose as indicated in his opening paragraph, but also from the verdict of the facts themselves. On the other hand, Matthew's Gospel bears all the marks of having been compiled on a scheme that would lend itself most readily to *memorizing*. This is one of the Judaistic elements it contains, and it may be regarded as an illustration of how the early Church carried over the methods of Judaism itself in its effort to instruct its catechumens in the faithful reproduction of its holy traditions. This accounts, doubtless, for the *topical* arrangement of this writing. Discourses, parables, and deeds are *grouped*, not according so much to chronological order, but according to logical sequence and in such fashion as to facilitate *memoriter* reproduction. This can be readily seen, say from a comparison of what is known as the Sermon on the Mount as given in Matthew and the same as reported by Luke. It is nearly all in the latter, but is scattered here and there. In Matthew, however, it is collected and presented as a sort of Messianic manifesto. Other illustrations of this principle will readily occur to the attentive reader.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

And one other thing will doubtless occur, and that is that as we read our Gospels in the order Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John we shall be impressed with an ever-increasing ratio of *personal* interpretation on the part of the author, so that when we come to the final expression of the consciousness of the apostolic Church in its registration of the life and work of the Master—that of John—it is oftentimes difficult to discover where the Master ends and the disciple begins, so marvelous is the merging of the one into the other.

The one reason that accounts most nearly for all the facts in the case is probably this: The fourth Gospel

sets before itself most consciously of all the task of interpreting, not so much the *work* or the *words* of Jesus, but Jesus himself. The early Church could not fail of this as its ultimate goal in gospel construction. If *what* Jesus *did* was of such supreme moment as to merit a Mark, if *what* Jesus *said* was important enough to command the skill of a Matthean compiler and the genius of a Luke, surely *who* he *was* and *is* is a subject of transcendent worth. For back of the *work*, however mighty, is a Worker more mighty still, and back of the word, however true, is a Speaker who is the Truth; and the Christian consciousness in its inevitable movement is never satisfied until it penetrates all the outer and phenomenal expression and enters with holy boldness into the sacred precincts of the Person who wrought so powerfully and taught so convincingly.

Hence it is not strange that the climax of the Church's effort in this direction should register itself in a Gospel that gives itself unstintedly to the revelation of the person of Jesus and the inevitable reactions set up by other persons as he passes in and out among them. By looking at the last verse of the twentieth chapter we see that the author had a clearly defined purpose. This, as he tells us, was twofold: First, he writes that his readers may believe two things about Jesus, his Messiahship and his Sonship; and, secondly, he writes that by believing these two things concerning Jesus they may become partakers of life in his name (John 20: 31).

On John's own statement, then, this writing is a book of Christian evidences. It divides itself naturally into a prologue (1: 1-18), a narrative section (1: 19-20: 31), and an epilogue (21: 1-23). The concluding statement is in all probability a sort of an affidavit appended by some circle of Christians affirming their attestation of the truth of the Gospel; and considering its wide variations from the other accounts, it may well be granted that such a commendation was necessary to Churches that had, say, any one of the synoptics.

The prologue is indeed the Gospel in epitome. Its

key verse is verse eleven. This is the movement of the entire narrative portion. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become the children of God."

The narrative portion, extending from 1: 19 through the twentieth chapter, divides at the end of chapter twelve. Here Jesus is coming to his own, and his own are not receiving him. His nation, his age, his people all reject more or less, and the sequel to their rejection is the solemn judgment delivered in the last verses of the twelfth chapter (12: 44-50). With the thirteenth chapter begins the revelation of Jesus to his own who received him. From this foot-washing scene on through the high-priestly prayer of our Lord we are in the holy of holies of our New Testament. Here it is that the real Shekinah glows and burns. God appears most fully in terms of human life, and the real heart of Jesus is most minutely disclosed to the gaze of him who leaned most closely on the Master's breast and learned most completely the Spirit of our Lord.

From this brief analysis it will be seen that in the light of the author's purpose it is perfectly natural that the emphasis in the first part of the Gospel should be on belief, and in the second part it should be on life. Hence the first twelve chapters are occupied largely with the citation of *testimony* and the registration of successive stages of *belief* on the part of those who come in contact with Jesus as he seeks to reveal himself to the world. This testimony begins with that of John the Baptist (1: 19), is carried on by his disciples (1: 35), and culminates in its incipient stage with the miracle at Cana (2: 11). The *work* of Jesus is then described as it develops in Judea (2: 13-3: 36), Samaria (4: 1-42), and Galilee (4: 43-54).

Beginning with chapter five, there is described the inevitable conflict which this self-revelation of Jesus to the world precipitated. The storm centers of this conflict shift from Jerusalem in the fifth chapter to Galilee

in the sixth, and thence again to Jerusalem in the seventh (7: 10), where it still continues through the eighth and ninth chapters and through the thirty-ninth verse of the tenth chapter, where the hatred against him is so great that he is forced into retirement beyond Jordan and, touching the springs of his early enthusiasm amid the scenes made ever memorable by his primal inauguration at the hands of John the Baptist (10: 40-42), Christ gathers courage for the coming catastrophe, and is soon found in the neighborhood of the capital city as he raises Lazarus from the dead (chapter 11). In chapter twelve he attends a supper in his honor at Bethany, receives with glad gratitude the loving deed of Mary as a preparation for his burial, on the morrow enters Jerusalem as its Messianic King, brings to a head the fury of his foes that has been so long fomenting, receives with devout joy the question of the Greeks, makes his final appeal to his own unbelieving people, and then "departed and hid himself from them" (12: 36).

So this self-revelation of Jesus to the world ends with a self-concealment on his part by reason of the fact that they "received him not."

But this is only half the story John has to tell, and not the larger half, either. From chapter thirteen begins the self-revelation of Jesus to his own that received him. This portion of the Gospel emphasizes the idea of *life*, and its keynote is *abide*, and from now on we have the most spiritually vital section of our whole New Testament. From now on Jesus is the Way, the Truth, the Life; and it is by walking in the way he discloses, living the truth he embodies, and sharing in the life that he possesses that men come to know and serve and love the Father.

It is not necessary to go into further detail. Sufficient has been suggested for the individual student to go through the Gospel with great profit to his own spiritual growth and with a better understanding of its primal purpose and how the writer achieved it. In conclusion let us remind ourselves of the two poles of

faith incorporated in the writer's scheme of witnesses to the Messiahship and Sonship of Jesus—the one that superficial sort possessed by a Nathanael, a man so innocent as never to have committed the crime of having an idea of his own, but who takes everything that heredity or environment flings at him with such an eager readiness as to call forth a rebuke from Jesus lest he spend all his capital at once and have nothing for future drafts upon it (1: 45-51); and that deep, agonizing, self-immolating and self-dedicating, abiding trust of a Thomas which registers itself in the cry of adoring love: “My Lord and my God!”

John is willing to rest his case when the self-revelation of Jesus wrings from such a doubter such a testimony; and surely as we read this and a hundred other instances in this Gospel which evince such wonderful spiritual insight both as regards men and women in general and Jesus in particular we have no wonder that the early Church was wont to see in John the eagle of the evangelists and that the later Church should have celebrated his praise in the lines attributed to Adam of St. Victor:

He flies, a bird without a goal,
Where neither priest nor prophet soul
Did mount so high;
Things to come and things completed,
Ne'er did see so much secreted
Purer man with purer eye.

Thought Questions

1. Give the earliest meaning of the term “gospel” (e. g., 1 Cor. 15: 1-8) and explain its bearing upon the later use of the name for the narrative of the life and the report of the teachings of the Son of Man.

2. Was the writing of a biography of Jesus or the production of certain effects upon the readers the chief object of the writing of a Gospel; and to what extent did deliberate purpose determine the selection of the material that went into the Gospels?

3. Into what two classes do you divide the four Gospels, and what is your reason for this classification?

4. What two considerations point indisputably to the priority of the Gospel according to Mark? (That Mark explains the death of Jesus by giving an account of his ministry; and that both Matthew and Luke give evidence of the use of both an earlier collection of the sayings of Jesus and the material in Mark.)

5. What principle of compilation does Matthew follow; and how is he influenced in his selection of materials?

6. What is distinctive of Luke (1) in the selection of materials and (2) in arrangement of his narrative?

7. In what way does the use of material concerning the infancy and childhood of Jesus support the view that the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke were late in appearing—later than the Pauline missionary journeys and the letters that these journeys called forth?

8. From what characteristics of the Synoptics and of John does the problem of the Gospel according to John arise?

9. How do you account for the fact that the early Church found no difficulty in reconciling the synoptic and the Johannine portraits of the Christ, while modern Christian scholars find here a real problem?

10. Does the fact that John is the most personal of the Gospel writers both account for certain peculiarities in his book and indicate that it was written long after the Synoptics?

11. What is the twofold purpose of the Gospel according to John; and how is that purpose served by the selection and arrangement of his material?

XI. THE LIFE AND WORK OF JESUS IN THE SPIRIT

Passages for Daily Readings

Sunday.—The Events That Link the Days of the Son of Man with the Ministry of the Spirit. Acts 1: 1-14; 2: 1-4, 22-36.

Monday.—The First Christian Brotherhood. Acts 2: 37-47; 4: 32-5: 6.

Tuesday.—The Ministry of Jesus Continued in the Church. Acts 3: 1-10; 4: 5-12; 5: 12-16.

Wednesday.—The First Human Mind Fully Emancipated by the Spirit of Jesus. Acts 6: 8-15; 7: 51-60.

Thursday.—The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Acts 9: 1-25.

Friday.—The Spirit of Jesus Enabling the Church to Break Down the Wall of Prejudice. Acts 11: 1-26; 15: 12-21.

Saturday.—The Spirit of Jesus Sends Forth the Missionaries. Acts 13: 1-4. Brings Them to Rome. 28: 11-16. And Continues Their Opportunity. 28: 23-31.

FROM the Gospels we now turn to what must ever be regarded as their logical and necessary supplement and complement—namely, the book called

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Introduction

As the writers of the four Gospels, from their various standpoints, give in vivid outline the life and work of Jesus upon earth while he was here in the flesh, so this last volume treats of his life and work upon earth through the presence and power of his Spirit. Every phase, however, is enlarged. The "earth" of the Acts is far more comprehensive than that of the gospel story. In the latter it means hardly more than the three sections that go to make up the little province of Palestine, while in the former it stretches throughout the length and breadth of the Roman Empire. The "life,"

too, of Acts is far fuller and freer than the "life" of the gospel story, seeing that it comes in contact with so many more types of character and currents of human activity. And hence, too, the "work" of Jesus in the Acts is far more imposing in its comprehensiveness and constructive character, all because the life and work are now accomplished through the medium of the Spirit. It will be our object to study the ever-enlarging movement of this life and work as they unfold under the master pen of the first great historian of Christian life and progress.

As to this author we can say that nothing to-day is of avail in seeking to displace the well-nigh universally accepted tradition that he is to be identified with Luke, the beloved physician, companion of Paul and author of the third Gospel. The most recent researches of Ramsay among the English and Harnack among the Germans all throw the weight of this testimony on the side of the tradition of early Christian writers in this respect. With this fact as a fulcrum, we may well enter upon our study with a sense of satisfaction that we are in the hands of a guide so painstaking, so conscientious, and so thoroughly equipped as from the preface of the third Gospel we know our author is.

As to the title of the book, we cannot forbear thinking that the world of Christian scholarship would have fared better if, instead of affixing a title of a later age, "Acts of the Apostles," it had been content to take the author's own characterization of his work, which he has written boldly in his first sentence, at least by implication. That first sentence reads: "The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was received up." Here there are two plain inferences. In the first place, we have the distinct connection of this writing with a previous one, our third Gospel; and, secondly, we have it distinctly implied that the earthly life and ministry of Jesus were simply the *beginning* of his operations in human history. And the way in which the author unfolds in outline the *con-*

tinuance of the work and life of the risen Christ leads us almost inevitably to a third inference—namely, that having *once entered* into human life and history, Jesus has become a permanent asset of our race, and ever after that signal event of Incarnation there has been a force making for moral uplift and spiritual power that can be identified only with the Spirit of Jesus.

This may suggest, too, a reason for the startlingly abrupt ending of his book. If we regard the author's effort to be that of apotheosizing the apostles, he has failed most signally; for he mentions only a few of them, gives fuller details of only two of them, and all the way through shows himself a devoted disciple of only one of them, and he *not* one of the original twelve. On the other hand, it is ~~inferred~~ that the object of our author was to remind the Roman officials of his day who might be disposed to treat harshly the members of the new community by persistent persecution that the empire of the previous generation had been kind in its treatment of the early missionaries and to urge therefore that they appeal from Rome drunk to Rome sober. While there may be some plausibility for this theory that Acts is in reality a sort of Christian defense aimed at a growing imperial antagonism, still this view is largely negatived by the one fact that what consideration is shown by the governing authorities in Acts is largely manifested in the case of a single man, Paul, and even in his case this courteous treatment is due, not to his being the herald of a new faith, but to his being a Roman citizen. And Rome must protect her citizens, however *bad* they might be in character or however *mad* they might be in religious vagary.

Nor can we look upon the Acts as a history of early Christianity, although it preserves for us some very important and thrilling accounts of the formation and life of many early Christian communities. But these are not primary, and their very meagerness prevents our doing our historian this injustice. We turn from all

these partial descriptions of this book and revert to what seems to be the real aim of the author himself.

When we come to phrase it, we can find no fitter words than those of Harnack: "The power of the Spirit of Jesus in the apostles manifested in history." This is so broad that it must be subdivided. Our author's own subdivisions are unmistakable. In the eighth verse of his first chapter he gives us the key to the scope of his work in the ever-memorable words that fall from the lips of Jesus: "Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Taking the full implication of this verse and reverting to our former statement concerning the abrupt closing of Acts, we see a splendid pertinence in the way in which the author comes to a full stop right in the midst of the most interesting phase of his whole story, as if by so much silence to convince us that his work is by no means finished, because the delineation of that work, "the power of the Spirit of Jesus in the apostles," is *still* being manifested in history. And so the story of the life and work of the Master has become a serial running through all times and climes, contributed to by all disciples, however humble, and the mighty volume of history itself will have to be closed ere one can legitimately affix the word "Finis" in dealing with the revelation which God has given the world in Christ.

In pursuing the fascinating story of the Spirit of Jesus as he makes himself manifest in the life of his disciples in history, Luke seems to indicate several signal centers about which his narrative revolves. The first of these centers is extremely important as connecting up the life of Jesus in the flesh with that life as manifested in the Spirit. To it our author gives nearly one-third of his book (Acts 1: 1-8: 4 and some later sections, such as chapters 12 and 15). This section should be studied under the caption:

*The Spirit of Jesus Manifested in the Founding and
Developing of the Primitive Band of Disciples
in Jerusalem*

This is most important from Luke's standpoint as giving us the place of the new movement in history, just as the life of our Lord in the flesh in its public phase began in the city of Jerusalem. "He came unto his own." So this integrity of intention to start where God's name is already known is consistently maintained, so that the very streets through which his earthly path had lain became the great avenues through which the voice of his Spirit reaches to the end of the earth, and the very temple which had been the scene of persecution and outrage upon his person in the days of his flesh becomes in the first pages of this new volume the veritable Shekinah from which glows in gracious splendor, untrammelled and unalloyed, the mighty power of the spirit of the exalted One.

Through several chapters the author pursues with fascinating detail the emergence of the band from the seclusion of the upper room, where, all told, they number but sixscore, to the publicity which great numbers, a manifest social uprising, and a demonstrated spiritual community always precipitate. It is in these three points that the author sees the presence and power of the Spirit of Jesus. The growth is marvelous, and this is a proof of the convincing and converting power of this Spirit of truth. The social significance of the movement as it registers itself in community of goods, sacrifice for the brotherhood, and loving devotion among the body of believers is a manifest token of the presence of Him who brought into the world the new commandment of love; while the new spiritual supremacy resting in the hands of humble fishermen, which makes them more than a match for the most learned and powerful theologians of the day, is a complete demonstration of the residence in their midst of Him who is the Truth, the Way, and the Life.

Now, all this is of the very greatest moment from the standpoint of Luke. He has already told Theophilus the story of the life and work of Jesus in the flesh. He has already registered his signal defeat in Jerusalem. With how great joy he pens this victorious sequel we can hardly imagine. The tragic gloom of Calvary has given way before the all-conquering splendors of Pentecost, and the city over which Jesus in the days of his flesh wept in vain (Luke 19: 41) has finally been aroused to a sense of its own shame and need. Callous consciences are pricked, the fountains of a deep grief are opened up, confession of civic crime is made, conversions in multiplied thousands take place, and constructive means are undertaken for the establishment of a universal Brotherhood in the name of the only Son. The kingdom of God begins to take shape, and the New Jerusalem with its spirit of love begins in the very heart of that old Jerusalem which had been so full of hate. Surely a great joy it was for Luke to pen this sequel of victory! And this really seems to be the keynote of this whole writing. The gospel that could break down Jewish pride and prejudice, that could snatch converts from the very criminals that had caused the Christ to be crucified, that could make martyrs of the truth out of Jerusalem fanatics—certainly such a movement was a movement of conquest. It need have had no fear as it started out on its world-conquering tour. If it could begin at Jerusalem, no geographical lines or racial barriers would be strong enough to stay its onward march.

But beginning at Jerusalem is only the initiatory step in the advance of the Spirit of Jesus. The second great phase in the development of the progress of the movement is

The Gentile Mission

The Church at Jerusalem is never a finality. Church and churches exist only for the extension of the kingdom. One thing written large in Acts is that the Spirit

of Christ is constantly enlarging our minds as to the plans and purposes God has for the race. This Spirit of Christ is racial; the spirit of Judaism, of England, and of America is national. Christ is superlatively the Son of man; we are too often simply the sons of our earthly fathers—ecclesiastical, educational, sectional, or what not. Inevitably there will at times come a clash between the Spirit of Jesus and these other lesser, narrower spirits. It came in the early Church very quickly, and it came in a manner quite unobtrusive. While seeking in all candor and kindness to meet an economic problem (Acts 6: 1-6), the primitive Christian band suddenly put itself in a position to have to face one of the most decisive crises in the history of the Christian movement.

Truly the coming of the kingdom is not with observation. This is by no means the last time in human history when an honest attempt to adjust an economic difference has given men an opportunity to glimpse afresh the Spirit of Jesus, for that is just the significance of Stephen. We see in him for the first time again incarnate the Spirit of Jesus. Under all outward form and machinery he caught, and he alone caught, the true principle implied in Christianity: that it was a universal faith unconditioned by rules and regulations of a national sort, that its destiny was world-wide, and that in the pursuit of its God-given goal it would have to cut loose from many of the moorings of the past. We have no space to show how eloquently and convincingly he set forth these views. They are written in letters of living light and fire in the immortal seventh chapter of Luke's narrative, where, after nearly twenty centuries have sped, we still go to feel the thrilling power of this first martyr's faith. The point we wish to emphasize is that the Spirit of Jesus always discovers itself in the community of believers, and out of the narrowness and prejudice of the Jerusalem body itself there issues a voice that utters a call to universal conquest. Of course that voice is soon hushed in death. But the

Spirit of Jesus cannot be entombed. It is not possible for the gates of death to hold the Lord of life; and so, just as a few years before there had been a death gruesome and horrid, followed by a resurrection most glorious, so now, though Stephen's body is buried under the stones of persecuting fury, his spirit cannot be killed, simply because it is the Spirit of Jesus. It survives to haunt for a time the vacillating leadership of the early Church as it plays hide and seek with both opportunity and obligation, and finally to incarnate itself in the life of the greatest exponent and expounder the Spirit of Jesus has as yet discovered among the sons of men—Saul of Tarsus.

The intimate connection between Stephen and Saul has been voiced of old for us in the oft-quoted couplet:

“Si Stephanus non precasset,
Paulus nunquam prædicasset.”

[“Had not Stephen prayed,
Paul had never preached.”]

But the historical continuity is not so close. The martyrdom of Stephen marks the climax of the first section of Luke's narrative. Paul's work is described in the third section, extending from chapter thirteen on. In between there is a section (chapters 8: 4 through 12: 24) which traces the record of the transition from Judaic Christianity to Gentile Christianity. In Judaic Christianity the center is Jerusalem, the leaders are Peter and John, and the general interpretation of the New Movement is that it is simply the culmination of Judaism; in the section devoted to the history of the Gentile expansion the center is for the most part Antioch, the leader is preëminently Paul, and the general interpretation of Christianity is that it is a religion of the Spirit of Jesus working itself out in individual and social experience, and its characteristic note is freedom from all the bonds of legalism and an abiding joy in the consciousness of divine sonship. The period connecting these two is the *transition* time when the cen-

ter is Samaria, the leader is Philip, and the general interpretation is not clearly defined—the gospel is in process of discovering itself in the minds and hearts of those who profess it. They are learning by the events of daily life and providential development what the mind of the Spirit of Jesus is. And so Philip's experience in Samaria, and more especially the signal disclosure of the incident of the eunuch, constitute epochs in the experience of the early Church as it seeks to

Keep Step with the Spirit of Jesus

in his onward and ever-enlarging conquest of the world. How difficult was the progress at times is shown in this section by the story of Peter's conversion to the theory of Gentile admissibility (Acts 10). His conversion is hard enough to secure; but even when secured it is of short duration. But the Spirit of Jesus refuses to be cribbed and cabined and confined within the narrow limits of the dictates of a self-deluded churchism. In the first century, as in many another, especially our own, has the Spirit of Jesus forsaken the path oft trod before and found expression in directions hitherto unimagined. The one great lesson of all history is that, so far as the growth of God's kingdom on earth is concerned, the people that are a "no people" are constantly coming into the range of the divine purpose and are made to rejoice in the blessed experience of becoming a "my people." So proud Jerusalem loses its leadership to despised Samaria, just as it did in the days of Jesus's flesh.

But even the freedom of the outlying provinces is not full enough nor large enough for the Spirit of Jesus to have a proper sphere for activity. The world alone is big enough for a habitat for such a Spirit. So as we follow the course of the Christian movement described in the last section of Luke's account we are constantly thrilled by the ever-changing center of gravity of the kingdom of Christ upon earth.

First Jerusalem, then Samaria, then Antioch, then

Corinth, then Ephesus, then Rome—these all in the life and work of a single generation become the successive centers of ever-enlarging circles of activity as the Spirit of Jesus goes forth to write its work in human history. And in all these centers it registers its presence in the triple miracle of transformed individual lives, transformed social ideals, and transformed religious motives. Wherever the Spirit of the Son goes, sons are begotten, brotherhoods are formed, and the Father God is loved and worshiped. This triple miracle takes place in Jerusalem, the city of the great King. Yes, but it takes place, too, in Corinth, the city of the greatest corruption; it takes place in Ephesus, the metropolis of Asia Minor and mother of all heathen superstition, and this city of Diana becomes a missionary base from which Paul and his helpers reach all the surrounding provinces with the light of life. It intrenches itself at the foot of Mount Olympus, and at Thessalonica, the holy city of ancient heathenism, is begun a work that sounds a new note for Europe and the modern world. Yes, this Spirit of Jesus, gathering new momentum as it goes from city to city, from country to country, from continent to continent, does not halt until, despite all the opposition and persecution that hell and earth can devise, it forges its way through the thick walls of the imperial capital itself, and amid the dungeons of imperial Rome there glows the light of the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ.

Luke's pen could not stop until it reached this goal. But having reached it, he is content. His last verse is the verse of victory: "Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him." And so this account, so full of bloodshed and persecution of the most cruel type, so full of human bigotry and pride, so full of shortsightedness on the part of the Church leaders and of failure and folly on the part of the membership, so full of the mistakes and miscalculations that ever accompany the acts of even the best of God's

children—this book works its way through all this turmoil and confusion, over all these obstacles, and past all these limitations and closes in the city of the Cæsars with a pæan of praise over the conquest of the Spirit of Jesus, just as in its opening chapters a generation before it had in the city of Jerusalem sounded the roll call of the world of its day after the fashion of some victorious general who was proclaiming his triumph over vanquished nations: "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongue the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2: 9-11). What was part prophecy then has become, for the most part, history now. The word of Jesus has been fulfilled, and his people have been witnesses of him in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto all the uttermost parts of the earth.

And so if we are to be true to Luke's key verse (1: 8) we shall find the one great mark of the presence of the Spirit of Jesus in the

Note of Progress

which is being forever sounded in the pages of Acts. There is a progress in geographical extension. The walls of Jerusalem are overleaped by the Spirit of Jesus, the semi-heathenism of Samaria is purified, the materialism of Galilean Messianism is spiritualized, the pride of Roman scorn is humbled, the wisdom of the Greek world is taught its own foolishness, and the crassness of barbarism is cured and its fierceness tamed. Over land and sea this Spirit goes, seeking, like Noah's dove, a place to rest and work; across mountain chains and the invisible but oftentimes impassable lines of national boundaries—across all these and more the all-conquering Spirit of Jesus goes. There is certainly a

note of geographical progress sounded in this book that Luke has given us.

A second note of progress is that of progress along lines of religious and theological interpretation. As the world grows in the apostolic consciousness, God grows. As civilizations of which they had little knowledge rise before their gaze and religions of which they had been hitherto ignorant come into view, their conception of God as the God of nations and the Father of the human spirit makes the old-time national deity of the Jews recede, and by reason of that perpetual revelation which is being continually registered in racial development the early Church was led into larger and more satisfying conceptions of the nature of God and into clearer and truer recognition of his relationship to the race.

A third note of progress is sounded in the wonderful expansion of the Church's mind and life in the matter of social sympathy. It is one thing to feel the bond of brotherhood in the Jerusalem Church; it is an entirely different thing to manifest it in Ephesus or Corinth or Rome. For Saul of Tarsus to persecute the Christians was thoroughly natural, the legitimate outcome of Jewish solidarity. For him to plead with and pray for the Colossians, especially for him to grasp the hand of one of them, Onesimus, a slave, and see in him a brother beloved, is entirely supernatural—or rather it is the natural manifestation of the super-Spirit that has entered into the world of social relations, the Spirit of Jesus.

Then, too, there is progress in the book of Acts from the standpoint of the means used and the polity developed in the organization and extension of the kingdom. It is a far call from the elaborate ceremonials of an institutionalized religiosity like that which throttled the life of Judaism to the spontaneity of the Spirit's leadership we see as early Christianity goes forth conquering and to conquer, a still farther cry from the bedecked and bedizened puppets that strut about in the rôle of priests to the fishermen clad in homespun who

fulfill the function of prophets of the new order. We see that here, too, the Spirit of Jesus has made all things new. By the mighty momentum of its impact it has shifted the

Center of Gravity

in more ways than one. Old views have disappeared forever, old institutions have been displaced, old paraphernalia has been cast aside, old prejudices have been destroyed, old horizons have been enlarged—all things under the enlarging and uplifting power of the Spirit of Jesus have become new.

This is finally tantamount to saying that early Christianity *came to itself* only as it *went to the world*. The Spirit of Christ cannot be known in all the fullness of it until it has an adequate area over which to operate. We can never know Christ completely until we have gone into all the worlds we know and have proclaimed his revelation; for each manifestation of his Spirit but evokes a corresponding commentary in individual, social, and religious life that adds all the more to the marvelous greatness of Him who is indeed the Life of the ages.

How foolish, then, for us to-day, with the history of the Spirit of Jesus in the first century before us—how foolish for us of the twentieth century to hobble our faith with a medieval conception of God, to narrow our sympathies to the little rut of sectarian bigotry, to embarrass our progress by holding on to methods of which Methuselah might well be ashamed, and in the glowing and thrilling atmosphere of Christian democracy to fly in the face of the Spirit of the Master of men by seeking to perpetuate forms of ecclesiastical polity that divine judgment dethroned in the days of Caiaphas, when humanity was sacrificed on the altar of hierarchical imbecility! All this the Spirit of Jesus, as it manifests itself in the life of his disciples in history, has protested against and will ever continue so to do until that Spirit shall dominate all individual, industrial, social, politi-

cal, artistic, and religious life—until, in fine, the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. And *then* it will be in order for some future Luke to take up his pen and write with a comprehensiveness and emphasis hitherto unknown the last verse as he sees the *Spirit of Jesus enthroned in the heart of the world*, “preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Christ *unmolestedly*.”

Thought Questions

1. Is there any objection to the traditional title of the book we are studying? If so, can you suggest one more appropriate to the contents? Can you recall the words in which the great historian Harnack states the subject of the Acts of the Apostles?

2. What is the purpose of the first of the larger divisions of the Acts (1-8:4) and what is the general scope of the events recorded therein?

3. Remembering from our discussion of the fourfold gospel (Chapter X.) that the idea of writing the Gospels developed backward from the resurrection and that of the Acts forward from the same focal event, would you say that our more usual conception of the Christ is that of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospels or that of the Christ as worshiped in the Acts? In other words, do our faith and thought dwell more upon Jesus Christ before or after the resurrection?

4. What place does Stephen occupy in the development of the Church, the body of Christ, and what is the significance of his short life as a teacher and preacher and martyr?

5. Recall the leading events narrated in Acts 8:4-12:24 (the dispersion of the persecuted disciples and the mission to Samaria; the conversion of the Ethiopian; the conversion of Saul of Tarsus; his witnessing and preaching in Damascus, Jerusalem, and Tarsus; Peter's mission to the house of Cornelius and the controversy over that mission in the Church at Jerusalem; the preaching of the gospel in Cyprus, Antioch, and Phœnicia; the renewal of the persecution in Jerusalem) and estimate the nature of the transition, if not revolution, in religious thinking that was occurring.

6. As the Christian movement changes its center by missionary advance from Jerusalem to Samaria, to An-

tioch, to Thessalonica, to Corinth, to Ephesus, to Rome, what threefold manifestation of the Spirit of Jesus occurs in the midst of most widely differing conditions?

7. Beside the geographical what other notes of progress have we in the Acts—as to conceptions of God, of society and of the organization and means of extending the kingdom of God?

8. Is it conceivable that a non-missionary religion should admit the Acts of the Apostles among its inspired documents?

9. What significance do you find in the abrupt ending of Luke's account of the activities of the Spirit of Jesus in the world—that he broke off his narrative in an incomplete state rather than finish it?

10. Is it conceivable that at some future time some later Luke may finish the history with a realization of what John foresaw in his visions on Patmos?

XII. E PLURIBUS UNUM; OR, THE RISE OF THE CANON

DESPITE the interest with which we have followed the history of our New Testament writings in their individual and isolated birth, the most fascinating part of the story is yet to be told. This is to recount how in answer to the needs of the evergrowing Christian consciousness these various letters, tracts, and histories gradually emerge from the seclusion of primal possession on the part of single and widely separated congregations and individuals and ultimately become a single volume, the most precious heritage of the Church universal.

Our treatment must be very general; if for no other reason that the period we have to cover is so long. It stretches from the end of the Apostolic Age to the latter years of the fourth century. In other words we have been able to give eight chapters to the half century during which the New Testament writings were in the making and have found this far too limited; now we are to cover at least two and three-quarters centuries in one-eighth the space! With odds, therefore, of forty-four to one, our statement must be summary in the extreme and to a large degree more dogmatic than discussional. Our sole aim must be to emphasize the main points in that process by which these twenty-seven differently occasioned and widely separated documents slowly gravitated together by a sort of spiritual affinity and ultimately were fused into a unity and solidarity that the Church, in all after ages, has seen fit to recognize as the ultimate norm of Christian creed and conduct.

The suggestion that it is a process at once declares that it has its roots in the past. And right here on the threshold of our discussion we note that the early Christian Church is indebted to Judaism for the idea that afterwards came to be embodied in the canonization of

their own writings. For these Jews from whom the first Christians came had their authoritative Scriptures. Beginning doubtless as early as the seventh century, B.C., they had by the time of the Christian era well-nigh "arrived" along this line. At any rate, the Canon, or Bible, of the Church at the time of its origin consisted of the Old Testament together with the Apocrypha. This we can see from the way the writers of our Christian Scriptures quote; and we can see, moreover, that it was the Greek Version (known as the "Septuagint") of these Hebrew writings. This version spread over two centuries in its making and was scattered as wide as the Dispersion in its circulation. It is the version that Paul uses in his preaching, it is the version the proselytes are familiar with, and, finally, it is the version that the Christians of the early day regarded as the real content of Old Testament revelation. This is the "Scripture" that Peter and John, along with their contemporaries, were always referring to, the "Law," the "Prophets," and the "Scriptures." And they knew no other authority for conscience or conduct until there stood in their midst One who spake as one possessing *inherent* authority. "*Not as the scribes*" was the starting point of the new light and leading. These men of Galilee could not hear Jesus's constant antithesis, "Ye have heard . . . but *I say*" very often without becoming more or less conscious of a time when they would put the Lord's words on a par with, or even above their written record. They soon, indeed, did come to the ultimate truth that inspiration is in man primarily and only secondarily in man's script. The Living Word antedates the literary word.

This constitutes the first or preliminary stage in the rise of the New Testament Canon. Before the idea had been faintly hinted, save by way of Judaism, long before the epithet had been adopted, gradually there rises in the minds of disciples, people, rulers, friends, and foes alike the consciousness that here is One who speaks

with an authority that inheres in himself and not with the borrowed leverage of the scribes, however learned.

Now in its *form* this is as far as possible from what we regard as a *canon*. For this *canon* of the Lord's words was not a thing written down or even codified, but simply the *oral tradition* delivered by word of mouth on the part of Jesus and heard more or less distinctly by the ear of listening disciples. Jesus left no written record; his single written sentence seems to be the one he scratched upon the sand (John 8: 8). Nor does Jesus seem to have made any definite provision for his disciples' doing any writing, but he was supremely convinced of the immortality of his teachings. Standing firm on the consciousness of their intrinsic value to human nature and their true picturing of the heart of God, he looked down the ages, strewn with the wrecks of earthly systems and creeds, and exclaimed with the calmness of Omniscience itself: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall never pass away!"

So just as in our previous studies we have seen that the teaching of Jesus forms the core of our New Testament as a literary product, so now we recognize that the authority that the first disciples were led to extend to these teachings constitutes the central factor in the later process of canonization.

This fact of the Lord's *words* being the germ of canonical authority is frequently attested in the pages of our Scriptures. As far back as 1 Thessalonians, in all probability the earliest, we hear Paul basing a prophecy on "a word of the Lord" (4: 15). Certainly this antedates any written record we have of Christ's teaching. Again in Galatians 6: 2 we have him referring to the law of Christ that is to be fulfilled by bearing the burdens of the weak. A stronger case is seen in 1 Corinthians 7: 10, 25, where on the one hand on the question of *divorce* Paul has a word of Jesus which for him settles the question; but, on the other hand,

in the matter of virgins' marrying he has no such statement and contents himself with giving his own judgment. Of like character is his reference to ministerial support as given in 1 Corinthians 9: 14: "Even so hath the Lord ordained." This principle is recorded by Luke (10: 7); but this does not imply that Paul is referring to the record in the third Gospel (which certainly comes after 1 Corinthians), but that both are reporting the common oral tradition. In such categories also must we place the reference to the institution of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11: 23ff) and finally the saying of our Lord reported by Paul in Acts 20: 35 and hitherto found nowhere else: "It is more blessed to give than to get."

Now the point of all this is that the authority of Jesus is recognized *not* because it is written down *in a book*, but simply because these commands and directions are regarded as genuine sayings of his, even though they come through the medium of oral transmission.

In the light of this underlying principle we must now glance at the history of the word *canon* as used in the caption of our present chapter.

Scholars tell us that the word springs from a Hebrew root *kana*, which means "to stand a thing up straight"; its noun form was *kane*, which meant at first "a reed" (compare our English "cane"); secondly, it denoted the rod or beam of a pair of scales, and eventually the scales themselves. In Greek the word *kanon*, which we spell in English letters *canon*, was used to designate any straight stick, as a yardstick. From this it passed into many spheres of usage to mean anything that "was a measure or rule for other things." The carpenter called his rule or his level his *canon*; again, the artist or sculptor called his model his *canon*; in music the monochord was called the *canon*; in literature the Alexandrian grammarians called the masterpieces of the classical period the

canon; in chronology the great decisive dates were called the *canons*. Other uses were perfectly natural. The moralist called his rule for right or wrong his *canon*; we hear from Euripides of the *canon* of the good, from Æschines of the *canon* of the just. Even Joshua is called a *canon* by Philo, the meaning being something like our "ideal man."

Specifically Christian writers found good use for the term. For example, Paul uses it in Galatians 6:16, where the "rule" of both Authorized Version and Revised Version is a translation of "as many as walk by this *canon*." Again, in 2 Corinthians 10:13-16 the whole point is the contrast between the Christian *canon* and the extraneous, or foreign, *canon* of an impertinent outsider. And in this fashion we could ransack the literary survivals of post-apostolic times and show how the word *canon* came to be used to denote "a concrete thing" or "a certain decision," as Dr. Gregory puts it. But the point we are specially interested in is to know that early in the latter half of the fourth century the adjective form of the word was used to describe recognized or authorized religious writings.

This appears from the fifty-ninth *canon* of the Synod of Laodicea (c. 363) when it was decreed that "private psalms should not be read in the churches, but only the *canonical* books of the New and Old Testaments." Later, in the year 367, Athanasius, in writing his "Festal Letter," declares: "I thought it well to set forth in order the *canonized* books." The interesting thing is that the list he gives is exactly our twenty-seven New Testament writings. After giving this list he concludes: "These are the springs of salvation, so that the thirsty man can fill himself with the divine responses they contain; in these alone does the teaching of religion become a message of good news." And he closes with a reference to Revelation 22:18, 19: "Let no one add to them or take away aught from

them." The significance of Athanasius lies in the fact that he is the first to lay down our *entire* New Testament as alone canonical; and as this is the very list which is sent forth a few years later at the Council of Carthage (397), where the great Church Father Augustine was present and when the question of canonization was finally settled, it must be taken as the expression of the mature judgment of the Catholic Church, gradually forming, to be sure, but eventually registering itself in terms of complete confidence.

It is our task now to fill in the gap between the widely separated documents of the end of the first century and the completed collection of the twenty-seven books at the close of the fourth century. How did this one come from these many?

It is indeed a clear case of *E pluribus unum*. And just as in the growth of our United States into a federated union far away from the embryonic stage of separate colonies, there was a nucleus in the thirteen original groups; so it is not a fancy to conceive that the nucleus from which the whole canon finally evolved was the thirteen letters of Paul; for these, in truth, constitute the backbone of our New Testament.

It is perfectly possible that before the close of the first century a collection of these letters had been made. The strategic position of the Pauline Churches, the comprehensiveness of Paul's contribution to the explication and application of the Christian message, and especially his own suggestion that contiguous Churches should exchange letters (Col. 4: 16), all point to the conclusion that the collection of the letters of Paul would be the first experiment in gathering together the documents. Of course we have no proof of this; but we do know that, owing to the cumbersomeness of writing materials, coupled with the high cost of literary production, at first all the books were not put together in one volume. As we should naturally anticipate, the four Gospels group together, the thirteen

(or fourteen) Epistles of Paul, then the so-called Catholic Epistles, where their number is fixed. The Acts and, more particularly, the book of Revelation, frequently form individual volumes. In fact, none of the great codices have the New Testament as we have it. It is always in connection with something else, either before or after, sometimes *both*. The Sinaitic Manuscript, for example, which contains the entire New Testament, contains also the Old Testament, together with the Epistle of Barnabas and part of the Shepherd of Hermas. The Alexandrian has, in addition to the Old and New Testaments, the Letter of Clement, a fragment of so-called Second Clement, and the Psalms of Solomon, though in the table of contents these Psalms are distinguished from Scripture. As an interesting incident in connection with this method of putting the writings in separate sections, we read that in a disputation which Augustine was holding with a man by the name of Felix, Augustine takes the codex of the Gospels in his hands, reads something from it, gives it back and calls for the book of the Acts in order to cite a passage from it. If this was true of Augustine's time, much more was it true of the earlier days. So it is not going too far to see in Paul's suggestion to the congregation at Colosse (Col. 4: 16) the germ that afterwards developed into a grouping of his letters, and this nucleus (the original thirteen) set the example and led eventually to the coming together in like fashion of all the others. Just as in individual Christians or groups of Christians under the law of Christ, comradeship and universality eventually come to a consciousness of catholicity, so individual Christian writings or groups of writings pass through the stage of segregation and isolation and finally come inevitably to the stage of coöperation and consolidation. Impression should always have expression. The Catholic Church will inevitably evolve the Catholic Scripture.

We come now to review rapidly the evidence of this

growth which the intervening centuries supply. Three stages may conveniently be noted:

1. From the end of the first century to the early years of the third century. Roughly speaking, from Clement of Rome to Clement of Alexandria. This is by far the most important period; during its later days we see most of the books attaining to the position they have ever since held. It is the period of the rising consciousness of apostolic authority.

2. The second stage extends to the consolidation and so-called Christianization of the empire, or, roughly speaking, from Clement of Alexandria to Constantine. This is the age of comparison of the lists held by various Churches and criticism of the claims of books not generally received.

3. The third stage brings us to the consummation of the canon by means of conciliar pronouncement, extending from Constantine on to the Council of Carthage (397).

The first period (100-220) introduces us to some valuable material tucked away in the writings of some very famous men. At the head stands Clement of Rome. In the letter he wrote to the Church at Corinth witness is borne to the several types of teaching we have in the New Testament. As to his idea of the authority attaching to these writings, it is perfectly clear that, while great reverence is accorded them, they are not yet put on the plane of the old Scriptures. Their authority is personal and spiritual rather than formal and technical. In the writings of Ignatius also we have the same attitude. Like Clement he puts himself upon a much lower level than the apostles. For example, he says to the Ephesians: "I know who I am and to whom I write. I am a convict . . . you are associates in the mysteries of Paul, who was sanctified, who obtained a good report, who is worthy of all felicitation." Polycarp likewise indulges in the same strain when he declares to the Philippians: "For

neither am I, nor is any other like me, able to follow the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul" (Phil. 3). It is easy to collect sentences from these subapostolic sources which show a knowledge of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, and 1 John. One passage in Ignatius (Philadelp. 5, see also 8) *seems* to refer to a recognized collection of Christian writings; but, for all that, we must say with Dr. Gregory that Ignatius is still "amid the rolls of the separate books."

It only remains to mention in this connection Barnabas. In his letter (Bar. 4, last sentence) he quotes a passage—"Many are called, but few are chosen"—with the formula "as it is written." As this formula is the standard way of referring to Scripture and as these words are found in Matthew 22: 14, this is sometimes heralded as the earliest reference to the New Testament as Holy Scripture; possibly, however, the saying was a proverb even in the time of Jesus.

If this be true we must come down another stage before we get an indubitable reference which designates as "Scripture" any part of our New Testament and thus consciously places its authority on a par with the Hebrew canon. This passage is supplied by one of the earliest and greatest sermons that has survived—namely, the so-called Second Letter of Clement (sec. 3: 5 and 4: 1, together with several New Testament quotations *passim*).

But so-called Second Clement dates from far on in the second century, and the attitude it assumes was prepared for by the apologists, particularly Justin Martyr. True, Justin does not apply the specific epithet "inspired" to the apostolic writings, but he ascribes to them a power apart from which the Church could not have received the Christian revelation. He also attests the fact of a separate collection of writings exclusively Christian and makes the statement that

these were read in the public worship of the Churches of his day. This means that these writings were thus elevated to the rank of Old Testament Scriptures and marks therefore a decisive step. He does not, of course, refer to *all* our books, nor does he put *all* he refers to on the same plane. He does not mention by name any of the apostles. While he is acquainted with some letters of Paul, Hebrews, Acts, and Luke's Gospel, he does not put these on the plane of "The Gospel."

The positive contributions of Justin are supplemented by the negative evidence supplied by his contemporary, Marcion, who was *l'enfant terrible* of the early Church. This heretic is for our purpose the most important man between Paul and Origen. He had his own canon. But this proves much; with him the sword was mightier than the pen, and so he slashed off what he deemed excrescences on the larger list generally accepted. He is also indirect witness to two other things—namely, that the *canon* was not absolutely determined and that the hold the Apostolic Age had on the Church was a tenacious one, since despite this strong man and his movement no great loss was eventually sustained by the Church in the matter of its early writings.

The close of the second century and the first quarter of the third register another great advance. In this period the testimonies came from the east and the west, the north and the south. This is the era of extensive quotation, with all that that implies, the era when we leave the dim uncertainty of the twilight and come under the light and leading of such scholars as Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and greatest of all, Origen. This is the time of Tatian's Diatessaron, the first attempt at a harmony of the Gospels. Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, first meets us. He is *facile princeps*, the primal wholesale quoter of anything like our entire New Testament. From the East the voice of Clement, the greatest scholar of that

section, comes to tell us the difference between the canonical and the uncanonical Gospels; as when he says (Strom. 3: 13): "We do not find this in the four Gospels that have been handed down to us, but in that according to the Egyptians."

From Carthage in North Africa this testimony comes in the terse sentences of Tertullian, the great inventor of theological terminology, who confines himself almost exclusively to the four Gospels as we know them; while in the epistolary section he revels in the thought that the apostles enjoyed the same spirit of inspiration that distinguishes Moses and the prophets.

Origen, the most learned Biblical student of the ancient world, closes this illustrious quarternion. He refers to the "four Gospels which alone are not spoken against in the Church of God."

From these four fathers we can make a conspectus of the authoritative Scriptures of the New Testament as held by the Church in such widely separated areas as Italy, Gaul, Africa, and Egypt. This would include all the twenty-seven we now accept, with the exception of James and 2 Peter and possibly the very shortest writings, such as 2 and 3 John. We must say, however, that in the case of the disputed books Origen represents an advance, though he does not speak unqualifiedly.

It took the experiences of the Diocletian persecution and the ensuing edicts of councils to register anything like uniformity here. As we have noted already, Athanasius was the first to lay down our Canon as it now stands. But this needed conciliar corroboration. This was secured partially at the Council of Laodicea (363), where only the Apocalypse fails to pass muster. The Council at Carthage (397), however, made up for this lack when the final examination of all our twenty-seven was successfully passed; and, while all the applicants for admission into the Christian Canon did not make a grade of one hundred per cent,

from that time on the vast proportion of the Christians of the world have had a uniform collection of apostolic writings lifted to the plane of Canonical Scriptures.

And now a final word in retrospect. Scattered, indeed, these writings were in their original destination to various groups and individuals. As far apart as the poles, we may say; yet how close do they finally come together in our New Testament! It is indeed a marvelous marshaling of hitherto miscellaneous manuscripts.

Palestine is four hundred leagues from Rome, yet the Marcan Gospel and that of Matthew are next door neighbors. Luke, directed presumably to Antioch, stands side by side with John, sent to the Ephesian region five hundred miles away. Nothing can close the gap between Ephesus and Rome, a thousand miles, save what is recorded in the Book of Acts; *i.e.*, what the Spirit of Jesus accomplished through the lives of his disciples. Romans and Corinthians leap the "stormy Adriatic" and clasp hands in the unity of Christian faith and practice. Galatians comes forth from the rural regions round about Lystra and Iconium and unites with the majestic Encyclical Paul sent to the metropolis of Asia Minor. Philippians, a gracious and grateful letter of thanks sent to the first Church the apostle founded on European soil, couples up with Colossians, one of the profoundest deliverances of his mind and heart and directed to a congregation he had never seen. 1 and 2 Thessalonians come over from Macedonia to the help of 1 and 2 Timothy in Asia Minor to illustrate the great principles and problems and perils of a missionary Christianity. Even upon the personal treasures of Titus and Philemon the Church of later times lays tribute, and Colosse and Crete forget the intervening barrier of the Mediterranean and sit down side by side in the noble family of the great apostle to the Gentiles.

As for the others, Hebrews comes presumably from

Palestine, James from anywhere on the wide horizon of the Dispersion; yet the disparateness of their destinations does not divide them in the great brotherhood of the documents. Cappadocia, Bithynia, and far-away Pontus contribute the correspondence of Peter; Ephesus sends the letters of her beloved John; Jude, like a blazing comet, comes we know not whence; while the seven Churches of Asia Minor send the weird but thrilling writing that completes the canonical collection of the Christian Church.

Just as to-day we may see a great electric magnet sweep over what seems to be a rubbish heap and all at once the whole springs into activity, as steel and iron long hidden from the eye leap through the débris at the call of the master spirit of magnetism, so during the period we are now glancing at the Spirit of Jesus, the Master Spirit, seems to be brooding over the Churches throughout the length and breadth of the Græco-Roman world, and, as it hovers here and there, in response to the call of human need and divine demand these precious treasures of the past come forth from their hiding places to hearten the souls and brighten the faith of all the coming years.

SOME HELPFUL BOOKS

I. INTRODUCTIONS

Jülicher.—Comprehensive yet concise. Valuable especially for analyses and summaries. Influence of this great scholar may be seen on pages 17-18 and 25-26 of this volume. Very suggestive on the Canon.

Moffat.—Most elaborate and critical in the extreme. Can best be read in connection with Ramsay's running review entitled "The First Christian Century."

Weiss (Bernard).—Two volumes of able discussion. Constructive and to a great degree conservative.

Salmon.—Conservative. Has merit in its criticism of the School of Baur.

For those who do not have access to these more ambitious works these smaller volumes are suggestive:

Bacon.—Small but thorough. Rather radical.

Peake.—Concise, critical, and constructive.

Dods.—A good conservative statement.

II. HISTORY OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE

For those who desire a brief statement along traditional lines:

Purves' "History of the Apostolic Age" is a handy volume.

Bartlett and *McGiffert* are useful for more advanced readers.

III. COMMENTARIES

These are too numerous to mention in detail. Special mention should be made of *Findlay*, however, for the idea underlying the discussion on pp. 131-133, and *Law's* "Lectures on 1 John" has also proved most suggestive in supplying the ground for the discussion of that letter.

IV. HASTING'S BIBLE DICTIONARY

This great work is of superlative value at all times. In this book *Bruce's* article on Hebrews has been largely followed on pages 141-143.

V. ON THE CANON

A comprehensive account is furnished by *Westcott*; a briefer and more modern by *Souter*. Both have very valuable appendices, exhibiting lists, and conciliar findings.

Source books in connection with the study of Canon are:

Charteris.—"Canonicity," and the modern and critical work now being edited by the *Oxford Society of Historical Theology* under the title, "The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers."

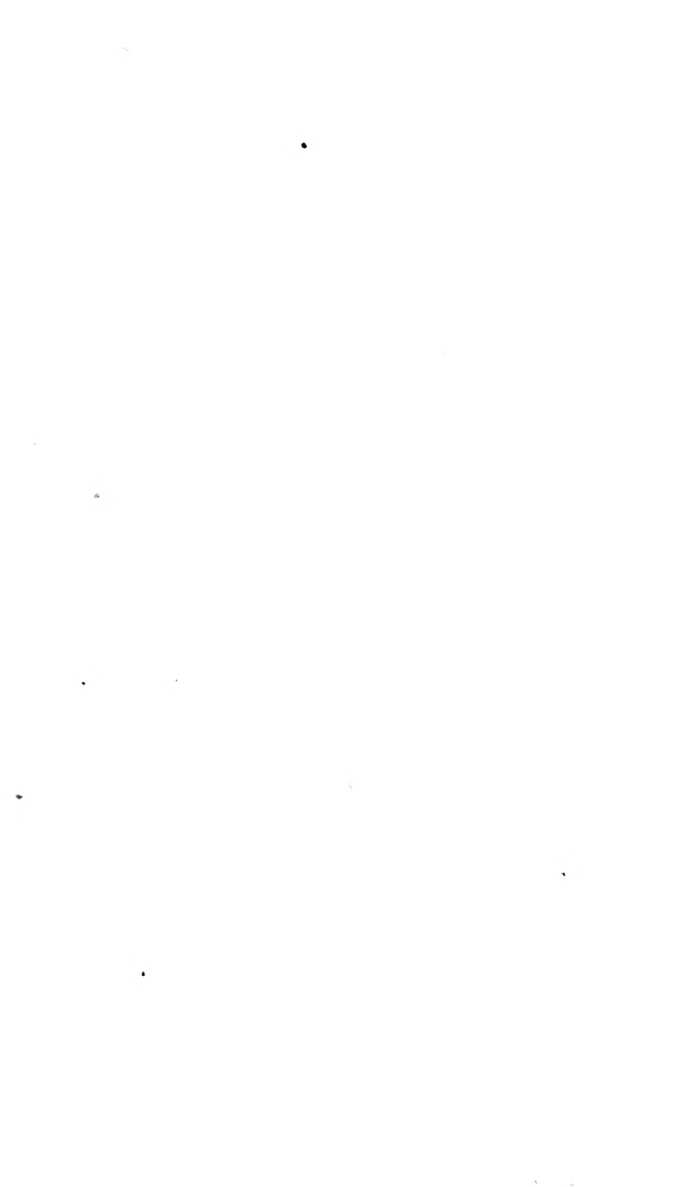
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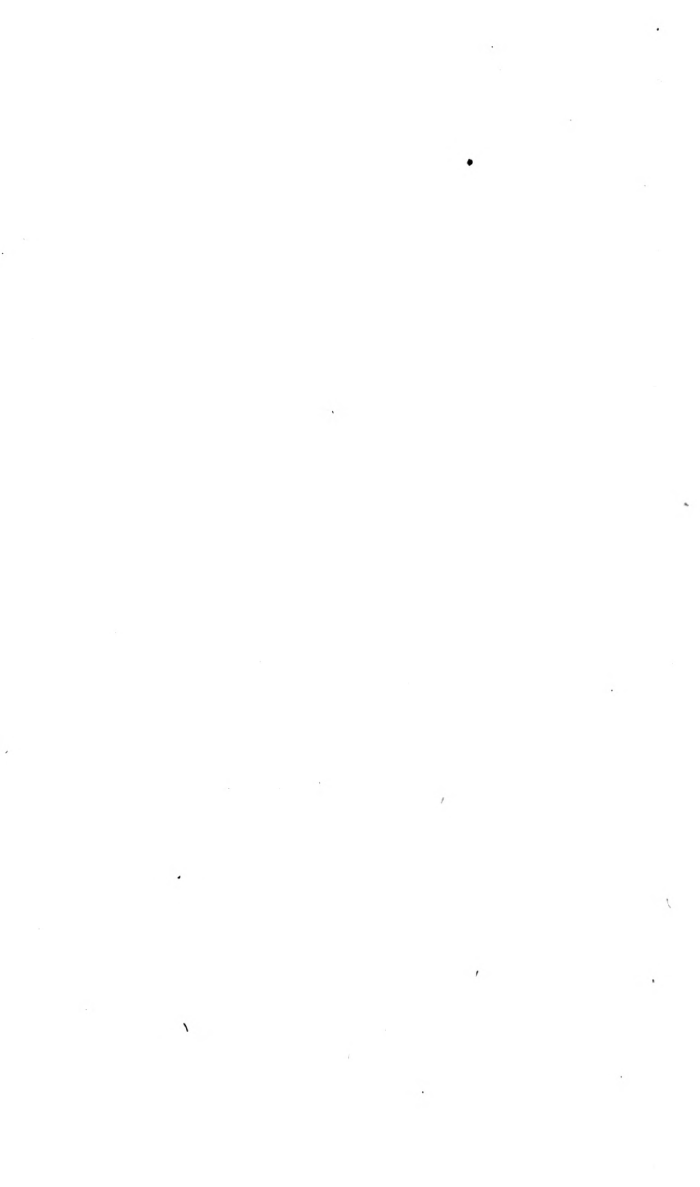
Among the more general volumes the advanced student may consult with great profit:

Milligan.—"The New Testament Documents."






Jones.—"The New Testament in the Twentieth Century."







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